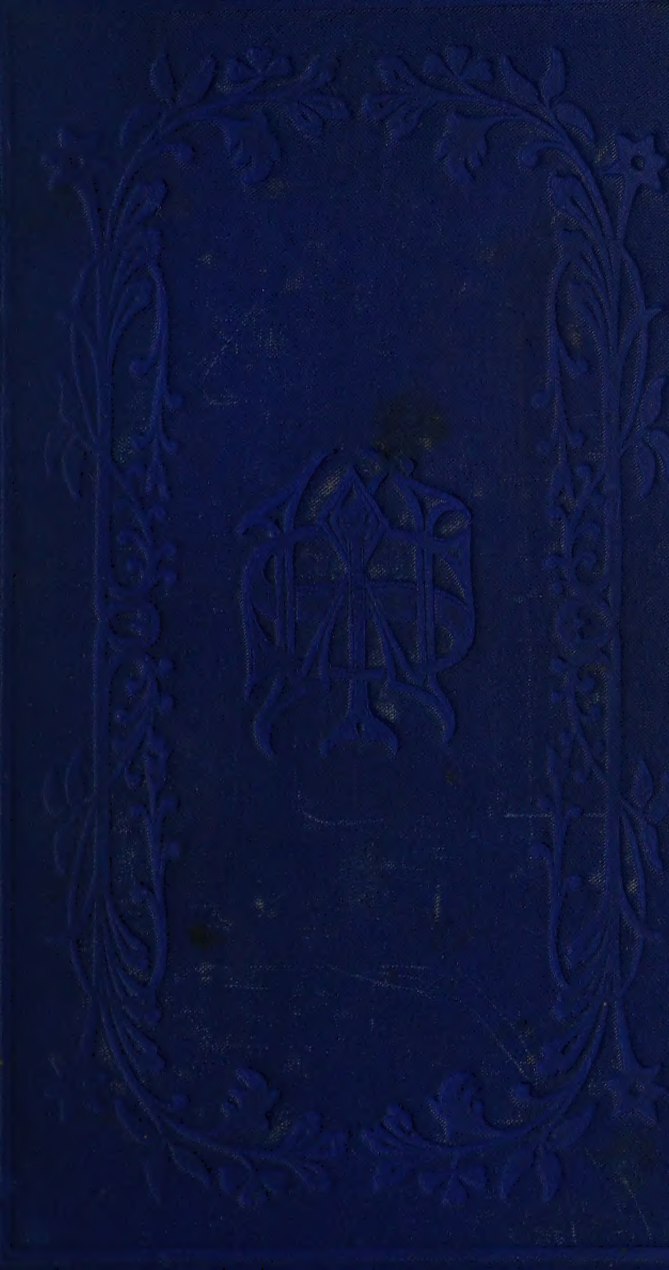

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LIFE AND SELECT WRITINGS

OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,

LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT.

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LIFE

AND SELECT WRITINGS

OF

~~THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,~~
BLESSED

LOUIS-MARIE

GRIGNON DE MONTFORT,

MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC,

TERTIARY OF THE HOLY ORDER OF ST. DOMINIC,
AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES
OF THE HOLY GHOST OF SAINT-LAURENT-SUR-SEVRE,
AND OF THAT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

A SECULAR PRIEST

OF THE THIRD ORDER OF PENANCE OF ST. DOMINIC.

Mihi absit gloriari nisi in Cruce
Domini Nostri Jesu Christi.

Omnia per Mariam.

LONDON:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON;
DUBLIN AND DERBY.
MDCCCLXX.

TO

THE HOLY MEMORY

OF

FATHER FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER,

DOCTOR OF SACRED THEOLOGY,

FIRST PROVOST OF THE LONDON ORATORY,

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE LIFE

OF ONE OF

"CHRIST'S BONDSMEN IN MARY,"

IS OFFERED

IN HEARTFELT GRATITUDE

FOR

THAT GREATER LOVE

FOR

MARY'S NAME,

WHICH

IN NO SMALL MEASURE

THROUGH HIS MINISTRY

IS NOW GLADDENING

GOD'S CHURCH IN ENGLAND,

TO THE GLORY

OF

GOD ALONE.

4464

"It was in the year 1846 or 1847, at St. Wilfrid's, that I first studied the life and spirit of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort; and now, after more than fifteen years, it may be allowable to say, that those who take him for their master, will hardly be able to name a saint or ascetical writer, to whose grace and spirit their mind will be more subject than to his. We may not yet call him saint; but the process of his beatification is so far and so favourably advanced, that we may not have long to wait before he will be raised upon the altar of the Church..... He wrote some spiritual treatises, which have already had a remarkable influence on the Church during the few years they have been known, and bid fair to have a much wider influence in years to come..... He comes forward, like another St. Vincent Ferrer, as if on the days bordering on the Last Judgment, and proclaims that he brings an authentic message from God about the greater honour and wider knowledge, and more prominent love of His Blessed Mother and her connexion with the second advent of her Son."

F. Faber. (Preface to Treatise on the True Devotion to the B. Virgin.)

PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

The Life of the Venerable Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort is a striking proof, were we indeed in need of proof, how an intense devotion to the Mother of God "brings into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ." It was through the love of Mary, that he became the captive, the bondsman, the slave of Jesus. It was after having given himself without reserve into Mary's hands, that he found that the Mother of God, and his mother also, had enthroned Jesus within his heart, and in Jesus, God alone. She, who as he tells us, is so "transformed into God by grace, that she lives no more, and is as though she were not," brought forth within him the blessed and only fruit of her womb, and then, he too, according to the measure of his weakness, was transformed into God. He lived, yet not he, but Christ lived in him. What is this but the old, old story, written in so many

pages of the lives of God's elected saints, that they who love Mary best, love God the most, and that they who are most earnest in her service, are ever the most devoted to the interests of her Son? Nay, how can it be otherwise, for Christ's unselfish mother, who on earth had no other thought but for His glory, now that she is seated by His side on her throne in heaven, can have no other will, but that they who have trusted themselves like little children in her hands, should become all in all for God alone, and that God should become all in all to them? "What manner of one is thy beloved of the beloved, O thou most beautiful among women," asked the daughters of Jerusalem; "What manner of one is thy beloved of the beloved, that thou hast so adjured us? Whither is thy beloved gone, O most beautiful among women, whither is thy beloved turned aside, and we will seek Him with thee?" And then comes the answer: "My beloved is gone down into His garden, to the bed of aromatical spices, to feed in the garden and to gather lilies: I to my beloved, and my beloved to me, who feedeth among the lilies." It

is in Mary, the true garden and Paradise of God, and the bed of aromatical spices, that Christ cometh to feed and to gather lilies among the sons of men. It is with Mary His beloved, that the Spouse is to be found, "Who feedeth among the lilies." Ever joined together in the eternal predestination of Almighty God, ever manifested together in the revelation of God to mankind, from the first promise of the woman and her seed in Paradise to fallen man, down to the last vision of the mother and the Child to redeemed man in the Isle of Patmos, Mary is ever holding Jesus in her arms, and Jesus is ever enthroned upon Mary's knee. The two thoughts so intertwine each other, that the one cannot be separated from the other; when God became man, it was not only as man, but as the "Man Christ Jesus," the Son of Mary, that He redeemed the world. It was the "seed of *the woman*" that crushed the serpent's head.

It was, then, the realization of this great truth which was the secret of the whole life of the servant of God, and which led him not only to proclaim himself the bondsman of Jesus in Mary, but to yearn

with a holy longing to draw all men by the same bonds of love. Far from him was the thought that devotion to the mother could ever lead him away from Jesus Christ, her Son; "so far from this being the case, (it is himself who tells us so,) there is nothing which makes devotion to Our Lady more necessary for us, than that it is the means of finding Jesus Christ perfectly, of loving Him tenderly, and of serving Him faithfully."* And again, when recommending his own special devotion to the predestinate, he says, that "it consists first of all in giving ourselves wholly to the Blessed Virgin, in the quality of slaves, in order to belong wholly to Jesus Christ by Mary, and in the next place in doing all things with Mary, in Mary, by Mary, for Mary, in order to do them more perfectly with Jesus, in Jesus, by Jesus, and for Jesus, our last end."† And yet again; "If I knew that my guilty blood could serve in engraving upon any one's heart the truths which I am writing in honour of my true mother, and sovereign mistress, I would use my blood

* Treatise on True Devotion to B. V. M., p. 39.

† Secret of Mary.

instead of ink to form the letters, in the hope to find some good souls, who by their fidelity to the practice which I teach, shall compensate to my dear mother and mistress for the losses which she has suffered through my ingratitude and infidelities. I feel myself more than ever animated to believe and to hope all that I have had deeply engraven upon my heart, and have asked of God these many years, namely, that sooner or later the Blessed Virgin shall have more children, servants and slaves of love than ever; and that by this means, Jesus Christ, my dear Master, shall reign more in hearts than ever."*

See, too, how lovingly he complains to the Divine Majesty that the "greater part of Christians even the most learned do not know the necessary union which there is between Him and His Holy Mother, who is so intimately united with Him, that it were easier to separate the light from the sun, the heat from the fire."..... "After that, my sweet Master, is it not an astonishingly pitiable thing to see the ignorance and the darkness of all men here below in regard to Thy holy Mother? I

* True Devotion, p. 74.

speak not so much of idolaters and pagans, who knowing Thee not, care not to know Thee. I speak not even of heretics and schismatics, who care not to be devout to Thy holy Mother, being separated as they are from Thee, and Thy holy Church: but I speak of Catholic Christians, and even of doctors amongst Catholics, who make profession of teaching truths to others, and yet know not Thee nor Thy holy Mother, except in a speculative, dry, barren, and indifferent manner. These doctors speak but rarely of Thy holy Mother, and of the devotion which we ought to have to her, because they fear, so they say, lest we should abuse it, and should do some injury to Thee in too much honouring Thy holy Mother. If they see or hear any one devout to our Blessed Lady, speaking often of his devotion to that good mother in a tender, strong and persuasive way, as of a secure means without delusion, as of a short road without danger, as of an immaculate way without imperfection, and as of a wonderful secret for finding and loving Thee perfectly, they cry out against him, and give him a thousand false reasons by way of proving to him,

that he ought not to talk so much of our Blessed Lady, that there are great abuses in that devotion, and that we must direct our energies to destroy these abuses, and to speak of Thee, rather than to incline the people to devotion to our Blessed Lady, whom they already love sufficiently .....while all the time these teachers are without piety or tender devotion towards Thyself, simply because they have none for Mary.....O my sweet Jesus, have these people got Thy Spirit? Do they please Thee in acting thus? Is it to please Thee, to spare one single effort to please Thy Mother for fear of thereby displeasing Thee? Does devotion to Thy Mother hinder devotion to Thyself? Is it that she attributes to herself the honour which we pay her? Is it that she makes a side for herself apart?...Yet, my sweet Master, the greater part of the learned could not shrink more from devotion to Thy holy Mother, and could not show more indifference to it, if all that I have just said were true! Keep me, O Lord, keep me from their sentiments and their practices, and give me some share in the sentiments of gratitude, esteem, respect,

and love which Thou hadst in regard to Thy Holy Mother, in order that I may love Thee and glorify Thee all the more, by imitating and following Thee more closely."*

How far our Blessed Lord kept His servant from such sentiments and practices, his life and his own writings will show. Yet, throughout the whole course of his life there is nothing startling, so to speak, in his devotion to our Blessed Lady. She, "whose abode is in the full assembly of the saints," and who was "exalted like a cedar of Libanus, and as a cypress tree on Mount Sion," struck her roots deep within his heart and grew up as she has grown up within the Church, silently and calmly; and no sooner, as I have already said, was Mary's throne firmly established in his soul, than lo! Jesus was found seated thereon, the sole Master of his whole being, his Leader and his King. Every day, every hour of his life breathed forth, indeed, an all-absorbing devotion to our Lady, but still it is not in his life that we are startled by any of its extraordinary manifestations. Like a river which flows

* True Devotion, pp. 40-42.

smoothly on its course to the sea, unbroken by picturesque cataracts which strike the eye, and force the traveller to pause and wonder, his devotion to the Mother of God bore him ever on its smooth and gently flowing surface into the ocean of God's love. His early consecration to the Immaculate Mother at the foot of her altar in the Church of St. Sulpice; his recommendation to his little brother Joseph, to place all his studies in the hands of his good mother; the little statue of the Mother of God which he always carried about him; his entering the third order of St. Dominic, out of love for that white habit which came from Mary's hands; his zeal as a true son of St. Dominic, in spreading wherever he went the devotion of the Holy Rosary, and in preaching Mary in season and out of season, and above all, as the most efficacious means for the conversion of heretics; a few mysterious words about the presence of Mary in his soul; the transfiguration of his face on the Feast of our Lady's Purification; the sweet name of Mary the last word he ever spoke on earth—these are the chief outward expressions of that

mighty love which inwardly consumed his soul. Indeed, even in other respects, although he has been sometimes compared to such saints as St. Simon Salo, and St. Philip Neri; there is very little of what is extraordinary to be met with in his life. When we think of St. Philip's strange procession from San Girolamo to the Chiesa Nuova, or of his reading light books before his Mass, or of his playing with the flowers upon the altar to distract him from the thought of God, or of that last wonderful Mass of his, when he who seldom sang, burst forth into almost unearthly song at the angel's hymn of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, or of St. Simon Salo praying in his marvellous humility that his body might be possessed by the evil one, and of God taking him at his word; how trifling seem the few extraordinary things, if, indeed, they can be called extraordinary, or even the singularities which are related of de Montfort? Wearing his rosary suspended from his girdle, while as yet a seminarist at St. Sulpice; kneeling down in the corner of the class-room to implore God's light upon his studies; always walking with his hat off, or at times, when he

thought he was not seen, lying prostrate on the ground out of respect to the ever present Majesty of God; carrying some poor tired-out lay-brother upon his shoulders, or lifting from the ground some beggar covered with ulcers, and bearing him tenderly in his arms to the door of the mission house, crying out, "Open for Jesus Christ;" throwing his rosary round the necks of sinners, and taking them prisoners, as he called it, for the love of Christ; refusing to preach when he thought that persons had come to hear him out of curiosity; abstaining from visiting his earthly father or mother, when engaged in the business of his Father who was in heaven; forcing with a holy violence his companions in a passage-boat to say the rosary; interfering for the love of God and his neighbour in some soldier's drunken brawl; walking to prison with as much joy as if he were taking part in some procession of the Church,—what are these after all, but the actions of a man who has realized to the full, that the only realities in this world are the love of God and of his neighbour in God, and the thought of God's Presence; and that every action and every

circumstance in the river of life, may be made a stepping-stone to heaven? What are all these but simply that "foolishness and weakness of God which is wiser and stronger than men?" Alas! let us confess with the author of this work, that "the saints have passed their life in the light, while we require the torch of death to enlighten us." One or two combats with the evil one; here and there a prophecy; a few visions of the unseen world; such are the chief of the extraordinary things which happened during his life-time to this zealot of Mary's name.

But if there be nothing very extraordinary in his devotion to our Lady as recorded in his life, or even in his life itself, there is assuredly much which is striking and supernatural, and almost, it would seem, inspired in the writings which he has left us. Indeed, I do not think I am wrong in saying that more light is thrown upon his character by his writings than by his life. With most men their written, are more guarded than their spoken words, but it is otherwise with de Montfort. In his writings, and even in his letters, he seems to pour forth his

whole soul without restraint, as if the Spirit of the Lord were upon him constraining him to write.—His shrinking humility seems to give way to a holy boldness, and he writes as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." His pen is "the pen of one who writeth swiftly the good things uttered by his heart." There is an undercurrent of prophecy running through almost all his writings, and he seems to catch, as it were, somewhat of the spirit of the elder prophets, when speaking of the latter times. And when we read his burning words, we feel that God had heard his own earnest prayer, and allowed him to dip his pen in the unction of the Holy Ghost, while the very pen which he used seems to have been formed out of the Cross of Christ. Whether in his Treatise on Divine Wisdom, or in his Letter to the Friends of the Cross, or in his prayer for those fiery missionaries of the Holy Ghost and of Mary, whom he foresees God will raise up in the latter days, and whom he addresses as if they were already born into the world, he seems to be writing under a mightier influence than that of his own spirit, while

in his Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin and in the Secret of Mary, he speaks to us as if he had been carried up by the Spirit of God to the foot of Mary's throne in heaven, and had heard "secret words which it is not granted to a man to utter."

It is by his Treatise on True Devotion to the B. Virgin, translated by the ever-to be lamented Father Faber, too early lost to us, perhaps, because we were so slow to run after him to the odour of our Lady's ointments, that de Montfort is best known to English readers;* and that work itself was brought into still more prominent notice a few years ago by Dr. Pusey in his "Eirenicon." At that time, very little seemed to be known in England about the servant of God or his other writings in which he speaks with such burning love about the Divine Wisdom, the Cross of Christ, and God the Holy Ghost, and which surely ought not to have been forgotten, when some were found ready to

* Another translation of this Treatise was also published at Dublin in 1864, (Richardson) with the "Nihil obstat" of Father Curtis, S.J., and the Imprimatur of the Archbishop.

blame certain of his expressions in his Treatise on Devotion to the Blessed Virgin as pious exaggerations, and even the Devotion itself as unsound in doctrine. In that remarkable letter to Dr. Pusey, in which he speaks so nobly and so loyally of the great Mother of God, Dr. Newman is careful to point out that when speaking of certain statements or passages, or expressions objected to by Dr. Pusey, he has strung them together *not as they are found in their authors*, (for he knew nothing of their originals, and could not believe that they meant what Dr. Pusey said,) but as they lay in *his pages*, and he mentions that he had never met with de Montfort's name till he saw it in Dr. Pusey's book.* In another part of his letter, Dr. Newman himself justifies two statements of the servant of God, although without reference to his having made them, which form the very keystone of his whole doctrine, and what is very remarkable, as he had not at that time seen his writings, he justifies them by arguments which de Montfort himself uses.†

* Letter to Dr. Pusey, p. 120, and p. 103.

† The Parable of Lazarus, p. 77, and certain expressions of St. Paul, p. 107.

As, however, there are still a few statements and expressions in the writings of the servant of God to which objection has been taken, and which appear to have caused difficulties even to devout clients of our Lady, it has seemed to the translator that the time has come, when the life and writings of one who in all human probability will soon be reckoned by the Church among her saints, should be laid before English readers, in order that those of his statements about the Mother of God, which were then, and are perhaps even now misunderstood, may be taken in connection with his life-long devotion to Mary's Son, and his burning zeal to God the Holy Ghost, her heavenly Spouse; and that they, whether in the Church or out of the Church, who have felt anxious about his doctrine, may know, that all his sayings and all his actions with regard to the B. Virgin, were directed for no other end, than "to establish more perfectly, (I use his own words,) the devotion to Jesus Christ our Last End, to whom we owe all we are, as our Redeemer and our God, and to put forward an easy and secure means for finding Him." Of one thing I

am certain, that no one would have been more greatly shocked than the servant of God himself, (nay, he expressly says so,) if even one little word of his could be thought to bear the horrible interpretation that Mary is greater than her Son, for it would defeat the very object of his whole life, which was to make Mary "an easy way to go to Jesus," and would separate by a hideous gulf, those whom he was ever teaching God had joined together, the Mother and the Child.

In making these remarks, God forbid that I should seem to wish to explain away or soften down any of the sayings of the servant of God, so as to drag them down to the level of that poor, narrow, timid and scrupulous devotion to the B. Virgin, which is not worthy of the name of devotion, and which never surely can be pleasing to her Son, Who, if He regards what is done to the least of His little ones on earth as done to Him, must surely look upon the worship which is laid at the foot of His Mother's throne, as homage to Himself. Nor is it for us, as the French Author of this Life remarks, to "lower the saints to our level, but for us to raise

ourselves to the height of the saints: to them it belongs to judge and condemn the world." "Beware," says F. Faber, "of throwing aside or paring down what seems most faithful and warm in the doctrines of foreign lands; do not tell that cruel falsehood, do not tell it to those whom you love, and are yearning to have within the Church; do not tell them that the faith is other here than elsewhere.....for this is nothing less in reality than to deny the unity of God's Church. Tell them not this. Take not the bread from between their teeth, to bring them within the pale of God's Church, to find that they themselves have been deceived, and that you, when you wished to attract and allure, have only so much the more effectually repelled them, and have taken from them that which in a moment of faith and love they would most generously have embraced."* God alone knows the harm which has been done to souls, to whom before their reception into the Church her doctrines and practices have been softened down, and who have been left to find out

* Notes on Doctrinal and Spiritual Subjects—Sermon on St. Thomas of Canterbury.

afterwards by themselves those many other doctrines and practices which, if she does not authoritatively teach, the Church at least silently approves; and surely those outside the Church should have all our sympathy, who tell us, as Dr. Pusey tells us, (if I remember right,) that if ever they should become Catholics, they would feel themselves bound to accept not only what the Church has ruled of faith, but all that she seems to approve of or encourage. Besides, there is no discipline of the secret in these days, and we have no right, for the sake of consulting the prejudices or the weakness of those who are without, to deprive the children of the Church of their full, substantial food. There may be such a thing as false condescension, and this is just one of those dangers against which, as it seems to me, we cannot be too much on our guard at the present day, when men are found to take low views about the Vicar of Christ, in order, as they tell us, to facilitate the return of those who are outside the Church.* But still, with-

* Since the above was written, the following memorable words were spoken by the Holy Father on the Feast of St. Francis de Sales at the American College in Rome:

out in any way paring down or explaining away, it is still allowable, nay, it is a duty to show, how different certain statements appear, when read in connection with the whole of the writings of which they are but isolated passages, and when interpreted by the lives of those who use them; and all the more, when their authors have been great servants of God, for "he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," and "no man by the Spirit of God saith anathema to Jesus." Such a servant of God was he of whom I am now speaking. It was only last October that another important step was taken in the cause of his Canonization, and the Holy Father then declared that all previous steps having been approved, an examination of the four miracles required for Beatification, should be at once proceeded with. Upon their approval, about which there seems to be but

"There is a time to keep silence and there is a time to speak, but when the time to speak has arrived, the truth must be declared, the whole truth, without limitation and without disguise. Let us never consent to any suppression of truth, nor to half measures, nor to compromises. The truth will save us, but only on condition that it be exposed in its integrity, and without a veil."—The Vatican, Feb. 11, 1870.

little doubt, we shall know by the infallible voice of the Vicar of Christ, that Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort is now one of the blessed in heaven.

With this object in view, it has been the desire of the Translator to clothe the Life of the servant of God, and those of his writings, which have not as yet been translated, in an English dress, so as to make them better known amongst us. It may not, however, be here out of place to notice a few of the objections which have been brought against some of his writings, in order, if possible, to remove any prejudices which may have been felt with regard to them. And the necessity for this seems the more urgent, when we read in the Life of Father Faber, that he himself, who lived to become the apostle of our Lady's Bondage in England, for many years felt a difficulty in submitting to its gentle yoke.

But first of all, it must be observed, with regard to the writings in general, that they have *all* been examined by the Holy See in the earlier stages of the process of his canonization, (1853) and declared to contain *nothing contrary to faith*

or morals, or any new doctrine contrary to the Church's common sentiment and practice. His writings therefore stand in the same position as those of St. Alphonsus, which although no one is bound to accept as *true*, no one is at liberty to condemn as *unsound*. Admitting then, that anyone who finds these writings out of harmony with his mind, or unsuited to his devotion, has the most perfect liberty, not to use them, still it must also be admitted, that no one has a right to condemn or find fault with those who do. More than this, in a work published at Rome in the year 1848, and dedicated to his present Holiness, a Roman Prelate, Mgr. Gentilucci expressly recommends de Montfort's devotion of the Slavery of Jesus in Mary, as one of the best, if not the very best which can be followed by devout clients of our Lady; and what makes this recommendation of still greater weight, is his declaration that his work had been published with the approbation of the most illustrious Roman Censors, one of whom was "Canon P. Charles Vercellone, Professor of Divinity, and ornament of the Barnabite order," and under the auspices of Pius IX.

who had given his affectionate blessing to the work, as a pledge of the divine favour.* He also expressly states that de Montfort's Devotion to the B. Virgin, has nothing in common with other devotions, which have been carelessly and wrongly confounded with it, and which have been condemned by the Holy See. No one who knows the care with which any work dedicated *by permission* to the Sovereign Pontiff is examined in Rome, can for a moment imagine that anything unsound or contrary to the Church's teaching would be tolerated in its pages. I may add that since the discovery of de Montfort's Treatises on the B. Virgin in 1842, at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, of which only fragments had previously been found, the Devotion which he recommends has had a great success in France, nor has anyone ever thought of blaming it. His "Secret of Mary" was published only last year with the *imprimatur* of the great Bishop of Poitiers, Mgr. Pie, and already more than

* Life of the B. Virgin, by Monsignore Romuald Gentilucci, Chamberlain of Honour to His Holiness, and Prebendary of the Vatican Basilica. An American translation of this life was published at New York in 1858, with the approval of the late Archbishop.

twenty thousand copies have been printed. The Translation of the "Treatise on the True Devotion" may be said to have been Father Faber's dying testament to the Church in England. May God the Holy Ghost fulfil his earnest prayer, and spread this beautiful Devotion amongst us to our dear Lady's glory.

I come now to the examination of the objections which have been raised against certain points of his teaching, the chief of which may be thus summed up; (1) that the whole general idea of slavery, as taught by de Montfort, is out of keeping with the freedom with which Christ has made us free; and that, in particular, slavery to the B. Virgin is inconsistent with her position as a mere creature; (2) that the special fruit of this devotion, of which he speaks in several places, namely, the presence of Mary in the soul, if it means anything at all, seems to attribute to her quasi-omnipresence; (3) that the doctrine involved in such expressions as—that elect souls are born of God and of Mary, or that the Holy Ghost brings into fruitfulness His action by her, producing in her and by her Jesus Christ in His members, or

that Mary and the Holy Ghost produce in the soul extraordinary things, or that when the Holy Ghost finds Mary in a soul, He flies there,—is unfamiliar, strange and startling if it is not something worse; (4) that the manner of going to Communion recommended by de Montfort, in which we are told to ask our Lady to come and dwell with us, and to lend us her heart, in order the better to receive and welcome her Son, is not only forced, but even calculated to distract us from His Presence, which at that moment ought to absorb our whole being; (5) and lastly, that the use of little chains as tokens of our servitude to Jesus in Mary, has already been condemned by the Church.

1. Then as to the general idea of the slavery taught by de Montfort. No doubt we are all free with the most perfect freedom, either to love and serve God or not; no doubt our Lord in His great love has said, "I have not called you slaves, (servos δούλους) but I have called you friends;" and no doubt, also, the general feeling of Christian men has been against the use of even the term "slavery," as may be seen by the substitution of the word "servant"

for the Greek and Latin word signifying "slave" in the translations of the New Testament, but they who make this objection know very little what that slavery really is, which the servant of God so earnestly recommends. It is the free bondage of the heart which he would have us embrace, it is the chains of the love of Christ, our sole Master, Who for our sakes and our salvation took upon Himself the form of a slave (formam servi, μορφὴν δούλου) and Who has bought us with a great price, which He wishes to see on our hands and feet. And what is this but simply giving back to God of our own free will that absolute dominion over us, which is His by right, but which has been usurped by the slavery of sin? What is this but perfect Christianity, which the poor words "service" and "servants" are inadequate to express, however preferable they may be to the terms, "slavery" and "slaves" when we are speaking of other subjects than God's absolute dominion over our souls. If Christ gave Himself freely for us, shall we be outdone in love? shall we rest satisfied in giving Him anything short of our whole being, body and soul, with-

out the reservation of a single right, we who have no rights of our own but those which we have received of Him? It is this slavery of which St. Paul glories, when he calls himself "servus Christi" (δοῦλος Ιησου Χριστοῦ) giving himself up to be disposed of as his Master wills; the term δουλος being always opposed to ελευθερος the free man,* and the force of such passages of Scripture having been much weakened by the substitution of the word "servant" in our translations. The same also may be said of those passages in which the expression "slaves of sin" is rendered by the word "servants." There were no servants in St. Paul's days, and no one surely more than he would have shrunk from giving his Master anything less than absolute dominion over him. Thus writing to the Romans he says: "But thanks be to God, that you were the *slaves* of sin...but have obeyed from the heart unto that form of doctrine into which you have been delivered. But now being made free from sin and become *slaves* to God, (δουλωθέντες Θεῷ) you have your fruit unto sanctity, and the end life everlasting." And speaking to

* See Schleusner.

the Corinthians of the freedom of Christ's bondage in the case of those who were bondsmen according to the servitude of this world, he says: "He that is called in the Lord, being a bondsman, is the freeman of the Lord: likewise he that is called, being free, is a bondman of Christ (servus Christi δοῦλός εστι Χριστοῦ) Ye are bought with a great price, be not made the slaves of men." St. Thomas also teaches that in spiritual things there are two kinds of servitude; that of sin and of justice. Now that this bondage of God and of justice, entered into of our own free will, is no other than the slavery of which de Montfort speaks, reduced to practice, may be gathered from his own words, in which he tells us that his devotion "may most justly be called a renewal of the vows or promises of holy baptism. For every Christian, before his baptism, was the slave of the devil, seeing that he belonged to him;" but by baptism, "he has solemnly renounced Satan, and has taken Jesus Christ for his Master and Sovereign Lord, to depend upon Him in the quality of a slave of love. This is

what we do by the present devotion."* And he also tells us, that this holy bondage or renewal of our baptismal vows, the greatest of all our vows according to St. Augustine, is in perfect keeping with the Church's teaching; for the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the faithful interpreter of that holy Council, exhorts all parish priests to induce the faithful to remember the strict obligation they are under, of devoting and consecrating themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ, as *slaves* (non secus ac mancipia) to their Redeemer and Lord.† I should feel almost ashamed at dwelling so long upon what must appear so obvious, had not the objection been brought forward by even learned men. The only difference then, between the simple renewal of our baptismal vows, and the devotion of de Mont-

* True Devotion, p. 86.

† Ibid. p. 88. (Cat. Conc. Trident. par. i. art. II. sec. 19.) "Æquum est, inquam, nos ipsos non secus ac *mancipia*, Redemptori nostro, et Domino in perpetuum addicere et consecrare." And again in sec. 20.—"Sed cujus animam amoris facibus non incendat, tanti Domini tam benigna, et propensa in nos voluntas, qui temetsi nos in potestate sua, et dominatu veluti servos sanguine suo redemptos habeat, etc."

fort, consists in this: that in the latter we make the renewal of our vows and the offering of ourselves through the hands of Mary, a practice so thoroughly Catholic, and in harmony with the mind of the Church, that I believe hardly a mission is ever given, which is not closed by the consecration to God of those who have taken part in it through the hands of our B. Lady. And never surely was this profession of our absolute dependence upon God more required, than in these "dangerous times" which have so many of the characteristics of the "last days," when men are again returning to that state in which the gospel first found them, "lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace; incontinent, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, lovers of pleasures more than of God;" nay, more guilty even than the old Gentile world, for having received the "mystery of godliness," they deny the power thereof, and rest satisfied with the "appearance." And what more appropriate way is there of testifying this our dependence upon God in the midst of

an impure and self-sufficient generation, than by offering ourselves to Him through her hands, who the purest and humblest of His creatures, has been destined, in His eternal providence, to crush the serpent's head?

But this brings me to the second part of the objection; that to make ourselves the bondsmen or slaves of Mary, is to give her what is due to God alone. It need not detain us long, for in the first place, de Montfort, by whatever name he may call it, always understands the devotion as ultimately referred to God, and following the advice of M. Tronson, generally speaks of it as the slavery of Jesus in Mary; and secondly, as he himself says, though in other words, even were he to speak of it as the slavery of Mary, there could be no more difficulty in calling ourselves in familiar language her slaves, than in speaking, as every one does, of churches and altars of Mary, or of vows to the B. Virgin and the saints, although every Catholic child knows that neither church, nor altar, nor vow can be dedicated or made, in the strict sense of the term, to any being, except to God alone. I may

illustrate this by the common familiar language of Catholics with regard to our Lady and the saints, so much misunderstood by Protestants, but in reality, perfectly simple and natural, in which we speak of them as granting our requests, helping and saving us; the absolute power of God on which they are dependent, and which underlies, so to speak, and supports their created power, being of course taken for granted and understood. In the order of nature we make no scruple of speaking of our own power, or of that of others to perform this or that action, although in simple truth we cannot so much as lift up our poor weak hands, unless God sustains them; and as it would seem unnatural and affected to say at every turn, "I will do this or that," or "may I ask you to do this or that by the assistance of God," simply because it never occurs to anyone to doubt God's assistance, which is therefore always taken for granted, so too, in our familiar intercourse with our Lady and the saints in the order of grace, we may fairly speak in the same manner, and take for granted the power of God by which they are enabled to help us, simply

asking our Lady and the saints to do this or that for us, to grant our prayers, to deliver and to save us. In like manner, therefore, when we speak of ourselves as the slaves of Mary, we of course take for granted our absolute dependence upon God, our Beginning and Last End.*

I have only to add, upon this point, that the principle of this holy bondage through the hands of Mary, has been approved of directly and indirectly by several Popes, among whom may be mentioned, Gregory XV., Urban VIII., and Alexander VII.; the devotion itself has been examined and praised by learned

* The Prayer *O Domina mea*, in which we consecrate our whole being to our B. Lady, was indulgenced by Pope Pius IX. Aug. 5, 1851, at the request of the Father-General of the Society of Jesus. It is as follows: "My Queen, my Mother! I give thee all myself; and to show my devotion to thee, I consecrate to thee this day, eyes, ears, mouth, heart, myself wholly without reserve. Wherefore, good Mother, as I am thine own, keep me, guard me, as a thing of thine, thine own possession."—Raccolta. F. St. John's Trans. p. 197. Compare also S. Brigit, lib. vi. xxxvii. "Then said the Holy Virgin Mary: "There are four kinds of persons who serve me; the first kind consists of those who leave in my hands their will, their conscience, and all they do for my honour; their salutation is pleasing to me, as a most sweet drink."

Theologians, and in a special manner by Cornelius à Lapide; it has been practised by saints, and propagated by religious orders; the Augustinians and the Order of Redemption of Captives, made it popular in Spain and Germany; the Theatin Fathers established it in Italy, Sicily and Savoy; the sons of St. Ignatius taught it in Poland and at Cologne; it formed the joy of Cardinal Berulle, and entered deeply into the whole system of the spirituality of M. Boudon, which has exercised so wide an influence in France, and which, if we may judge by many signs,* bids fair to have also influence in England; it was, as F. Faber has reminded us, a favourite devotion of English Catholics in the seventeenth century; it has been examined in the process of the Canonization of the Venerable de Montfort, and again with "great critical acumen, every objection having been fully discussed and solved"† in the "Analecta Juris Pontificii"

* Amongst which I may mention the Life of Mother Margaret Mary Hallahan, which breathes his spirit, and the recent translations of some of his works by Mr. Healy Thompson.

† Editors of the Dublin Trans. of "True Devotion." The translation has the imprimatur of the Archbishop.

published at Rome; and lastly, as I have already said, it comes before the faithful recommended in a special manner in a work dedicated by permission to His present Holiness Pope Pius IX. Who after this can have any scruple about using it?

2. The presence of Mary in the soul.—In referring to the communication which the servant of God made to him upon this subject, M. Blain, his old schoolfellow and friend, remarks, that probably he would have been unable to explain his own meaning, "because, in the mystical life there are operations of grace which are inexplicable even to those who are favoured with them." But as, in his "Secret of Mary," he speaks of the presence of the Blessed Virgin in our interior as one of the special fruits of the devotion which he recommended, we may, I think, fairly try to discover what he means. In the passage to which I refer he says, that the "soul is not to torment itself if it does not at once enjoy the sweet presence of the Blessed Virgin; for this grace is not given to all, and when God favours a soul with it out of His great mercy, it is very easily lost, unless the soul be faithful in the

practice of frequent self-recollection." And he goes on to say that experience will teach us far more than he can tell us: "Let us labour then," he adds, "and act in such a way, dear soul, that by the faithful practice of this devotion 'the soul of Mary may be in us to glorify the Lord, and that the spirit of Mary may be in us to rejoice in God her Saviour.' (St. Ambrose."..... And let us not think that "there is more glory in dwelling in Abraham's bosom, which was called Paradise, than in the bosom of Mary, in which God has placed His throne. These are the words of the learned Abbot Guerric..... When the life of Mary is well-established in a soul, it is no longer in some sort the soul which lives, it is Mary who lives therein. The soul of Mary, so to speak, becomes our soul. Now, when by an ineffable but *true* grace, the divine Mary is queen in a soul, what wonders does she not work! As she is the worker of great marvels, particularly in the interior, she works there in secret, unknown even to the soul itself, which, were it to know, would only destroy her work.....Do not think, dear soul, that Mary, the most

fruitful of all pure creatures, and so fruitful as to produce even a God-man, remains idle in a faithful soul. She causes it to live without ceasing to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to live in it. 'My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you.' (Gal. x. 19.) If Jesus Christ is as really the fruit of Mary in every soul in particular, as for the whole world in general, it is especially in the soul in which the divine Virgin dwells, that Jesus Christ is her fruit and master-piece. In a word, Mary becomes everything to that soul before Jesus Christ: she enlightens its spirit by her pure faith, she deepens the heart by her humility, she enlarges and inflames it by her charity, she purifies it by her purity, she ennobles and makes it great by her maternity. But where shall I stop? It is only experience which can teach these marvels of Mary, marvels which seem incredible to the learned and proud, and even to the generality of devout men and women." It is evident, I think, from this passage that the presence of Mary of which he speaks, is some *real* though special grace and privilege.

Now, it may be remarked, in the first place, that in the Raccolta, a work, it need not be said, of high authority, an exactly similar expression is used. It occurs in the Novena in preparation for the Nativity of our Lady, in which we pray that she "would *come down again and be re-born spiritually* in our souls." And Dr. Newman, in his letter to Dr. Pusey, alluding to this very idea, justifies it by the same or similar passages from St. Paul, which are quoted by de Montfort, although he had not at that time seen any of his writings. Thus, for example, St. Paul speaks of his wish to impart to his converts, "not only the gospel but his own soul."* But there is also a passage in the Life of Father de Ravignan, which, if I mistake not, will throw great light upon this presence of our Lady in the soul. It is as follows: "From the very beginning the blessed Saint (Ignatius) responded to the affection of his son, but their hearts went on to closer and closer union. I cannot mention precisely at what time this closer union began;

* Letter to Dr. Pusey, p. 107.

but from repeated confidential communications, I know that for the latter years of his life, he enjoyed, not mere distant affection, but direct immediate intercourse; and from this period F. de Ravignan dealt with the saint with all the familiarity of a child. On the one side there was unceasing invocation; for long hours together spent in prayer he spoke with his heart rather than his lips, repeating *Father! Father!* On the other side there was sensible assistance and a *presence almost real.* 'I do not see him,' said F. de Ravignan, '*I do more, I feel him; he is there, and I touch him by my heart.*'* Again, when asked on his death-bed whether St. Ignatius was still, as formerly, *always present* to his soul, he answered, 'The thought of my Father, St. Ignatius, never leaves me night or day.....I received a great grace last night! I asked my Blessed Father whether this sickness would lead to my death. He gave me an answer in the *depth of my heart*, with a clearness and distinctness which fill me at this moment with the most absolute certainty,

* Life of Father de Ravignan, by Father de Ponlevoy, Eng. Trans. p. 566.

accompanied with the greatest joy and peace."* Surely, then, what the presence of his Father St. Ignatius was to F. de Ravignan, the presence of Mary was to Ven. Grignon de Montfort. Nothing less, perhaps something more, even as St. Ignatius is less than his glorious Queen. And it is, although no doubt in an inferior degree, this intimate union of soul with soul and spirit with spirit, which the servant of God promises, not to every one, but to him who shall be faithful in the practice of his devotion to our Blessed Lady. O happy, happy lot, if to any one who reads this Life the day should ever come when Mary may speak to him as St. Ignatius spoke to his faithful son, and when he may feel her and touch her by his heart! Now, so far as I am aware, no one has ever objected to this passage in the Life of F. de Ravignan: no one has taken scandal at the presence of St. Ignatius in the soul of his devoted follower. Why, then, should any objection or difficulty be raised as to the presence of the Queen of Saints in the souls of those who have consecrated themselves

* Ibid. p. 648.

in a special manner to her service? But it may be said that the grace given to F. de Ravignan was a special grace, rarely met with, even in the Lives of the Saints, whereas this presence of our Lady is held out by de Montfort as one of the fruits of his devotion. Granted: but the servant of God also expressly speaks of it as a rare grace, not given to all; yet, even if it were given, at least in some inferior degree and proportioned to the weakness of ordinary Christians, why should there be any difficulty in admitting it? Is it because it seems to make Mary as it were omnipresent? The servant of God seems to have anticipated the objection when he says in the words of Abbot Guerric: "And let not any one think that there is more glory in dwelling in Abraham's bosom, which was called Paradise, than in the bosom of Mary, in which God has placed His throne." Surely, the bosom of Mary, who is the true Paradise of God, is broader and deeper than that of Abraham, and yet the bosom of our Father Abraham, on the testimony of our Blessed Lord Himself, was broad enough to be the resting-place of all the faithful who

died before He came. How much more, then, may the mother of all living contain in her ample bosom, and soothe by her gentle presence, if God so will, how or in what way we need not inquire, every poor Lazarus who cries to her from earth. And here I may remark that Dr. Newman, who, as I must again repeat, had not, at the time he wrote, read de Montfort's works, makes use of the same parable of Lazarus in confirmation, or at least in justification of our Lady's reception at the hour of death of the faithful committed to her arms. The servant of God goes farther, and supposes that even those of the living who have consecrated themselves in a special manner to her service, may, in a mysterious but still true sense, be nourished in her bosom, and enjoy her presence in their souls. The thought is intimately allied with what he teaches, in common with many others, about her divine maternity, by which she is not only Mother of the God-Man, but also spiritually engenders the living members of His mystical Body, and of which I shall have to speak later on. This presence of Mary then, cannot in any way be

said to imply omnipresence, unless this attribute be also ascribed to Abraham, which no one has ever thought of ascribing to him. Nay, those who make such an objection, especially those outside the Church, who still believe in the personality of the spirit of evil, ought first of all to explain what is meant by the immense power and influence and almost universal presence amongst men attributed to Satan. For what can be more unreasonable than to admit in her great adversary what they deny to the great Mother of God, who in Him sees all things, and embraces the whole of His creation, a difficulty which seems to be quite passed over by most Protestants. Indeed, the whole question of Satan's power throws no little light upon the empire of our Lady, who is the woman appointed by God from the beginning to crush his head. And how shall we, the children of the Church, who believe her to be clothed with the infinite dignity of the Mother of God, and to be now living and reigning in heaven, not with her soul alone, but with her virgin body also, and therefore in no incomplete state

of being, and who know her to be the Queen of angels and of saints by no mere idle title, exalted far above principalities and thrones and dominations and virtues and powers and Cherubim and Seraphim, even to the very steps of the throne of the Eternal Godhead; how shall we dare to limit her influence over the souls of the just, who, as members of Christ's Body, were once mystically carried in her womb? Again, if Satan and his evil spirits can possess the souls and the bodies of men, and hold even the bodies of the saints, by God's permission, in their cruel grasp, surely we may be allowed to attribute in certain cases by the like permission of God, as great or even greater power to the blessed saints and their glorious Queen; nor will it do to object, that the evil spirits actually surround us, "going about, seeking whom they may devour," whereas the saints, (differing in this respect from the angels, who although in heaven, are all ministering spirits,) are resting in Jesus, and do not leave their place of rest in heaven; for, as St. Thomas teaches us, the spirits of the just made perfect "are not hindered

in their knowledge by local distance,* and being made, not only like, but "equal to the angels," share in the angels' speech, which consists in an intellectual operation, unimpeded by distance of place,† and may therefore, although in heaven, if God so will, in Whom both we and they not only live and move and have our being, but our very bond of union, as easily communicate with us and influence us in the depth of our souls, as if they were near to us by our sides on earth. If Abraham could speak from Limbo to Dives in hell, how much more can Mary speak to the hearts of her children, and the saints to the souls of their brethren upon earth; nay, and (what Abraham could not do to Dives, for between them was fixed a great chaos,) even fill them with their heavenly presence, now that "we are come to the Mount Sion, and to the city of the living

* S. Thomas, Pars. i. Qu. lxxxix. Art. vii. where he refers to the Parable of Lazarus.

† Pars i. Qu. cvii. de Locutione Angelorum, Art. iv. where he again quotes the same passage, upon which he grounds an *a fortiori* argument. Compare S. Augustine de Civ. Dei, lib. 12. c. i.—"Non erunt duæ societates hominum et angelorum, sed una; quia omnium beatitudo est adhærere uni Deo."

God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the firstborn who are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the just made perfect." "If," as the mediæval author of the "Fiery Soliloquy with God,"* so beautifully says, "being united with the Word, and filling all things with Jesus, even the heavens and the earth and all things therein by our love, which is God, we meet in Jesus with all His assembled saints, and are able in the breadth of our hearts to present them before the face of the Father, as His elect family," surely the saints in Jesus can reach to us in God from heaven, and bring down our Father's blessing on our souls. Ah, yes! there is no "great chaos fixed" between them and us, we are all very near to one another in God through Christ, both the saints in heaven and the saints on earth, for we are all members of that one Body Mystical, of which He is the

* Alter Thomas a Kempis, sive *Ignitum cum Deo Soliloquium* R. D. Gerlaci Petri Daventriensis, Canonici Regularis. Coloniæ Agrippinæ MDCXVI. A new edition of this admirable little work edited by Strange was published by Heberle at Cologne in 1849. The translator hopes, before long, to be able to translate it into English.

Head, Who is Mary's Son, and Who could say, even when on earth, that He was still in heaven, and we are all partakers, they by glory and we by grace, of the same Divine Nature, by which the whole Blessed Trinity is dwelling in our souls. No doubt, however, the presence of Mary in its full degree, of which de Montfort speaks, is reserved only for the highest stages of the mystical life, when the soul has reached the state of perfect union with God.*

* See in connection with the charge brought against Catholics of making Our Lady omnipresent, an admirable argument of the Dublin Review, Vol. vii., pp. 148-9. —"There is no more amazing fact in all controversy, than that any Christian, who believes in the Incarnation, should have laid such stress on a fallacy so easily and so triumphantly refuted. Consider that dear Soul of Our B. Lord, which was created for the very purpose of suffering in our behalf, and which did in fact experience anguish so unspeakable. When Our Lord was enduring His agony, or was hanging on the cross, or now that He is in heaven,—does any Christian doubt that His Soul did and does read the hearts of those who address Him? That it did and does apprehend most accurately men's interior circumstances? That it did and does know what is the fittest and most appropriate remedy for their interior evils? Yet, do Christians therefore regard that Soul as omnipresent? as uncreated? as infinite? How readily Protestants take up a weapon against the Church which recoils on themselves with effect the most fatal!.....The facial vision of God was enjoyed by Mary

3. The doctrine involved in such expressions as that "elect souls are born of God and of Mary," etc.—I must confess with the writer of an admirable article in the Dublin Review, which is as remark-

from the moment of her death, quite as truly, although of course by no means in the same degree as by Christ Himself. We are very far indeed from saying that the knowledge which she thus obtains is co-extensive with the human knowledge of Christ; to suppose so, would be a monstrous and intolerable error. But we do say, that even if it *had* been as co-extensive, she would not on that account have ceased to be a creature; unless indeed, you would sanction the heretical and even absurd proposition, that the Soul of Christ was raised from the sphere of createdness and finiteness to that of infinity and omnipresence."—May not a somewhat similar argument be used with regard to the presence of Mary in a soul? All who believe in the Real Presence in the B. Eucharist will admit that the created Soul of Christ is received by concomitance with His Precious Body and Blood by all communicants, yet this does not make His Soul, any more than His Body and Blood, omnipresent, or lift it above the sphere of createdness. Why then, if by God's permission, although of course in an altogether different and spiritual manner, and in a far inferior degree, Mary be supposed to be present in the souls of certain of her servants, should it be said that she is on that account omnipresent or has ceased to be a creature? Of course, our dear Lord's Sacramental Presence stands, as it were in an order by itself, and we cannot argue from it, to any other kind of presence; yet, so far as the question of omnipresence is concerned, the argument is valid.

able for its thorough Catholic spirit as for its theological acumen,* that I am quite unable to see the force of the objections brought against these beautiful and suggestive expressions. The thought which they express, is simply a development of the doctrine of our Lady's Maternity, and is evidently taken from St. Augustine. Nay, the very passage is quoted by de Montfort in which that Father says, that according to the Spirit, Mary is clearly our mother, both because we are His members Who took flesh in her womb, and because by her love she cooperated in the birth of the faithful in the Church, of whom He is the Head.† The same thought is also expressed by Origen, when he says: "Jesus says to His Mother, 'Behold thy Son!' and not 'behold he too is thy son!' as if He had said: Behold here is Jesus Whom thou hast begotten. For whoever is perfect, no longer lives himself, but

* Dublin Review, new series, vol. vii. "Dr. Pusey on Marian devotion."

† De S. Virginitate, lib. i. 6. "Spiritu quidem..... plane Mater est membrorum ejus, quod nos sumus; quia cooperata est charitate ut fideles in Ecclesia nascerentur, quæ illius capitis membra sunt: corpore vero ipsius capitis Mater."

Christ lives in him. And as in him Christ lives, so it is said to Mary: Behold thy Son, Christ."* And St. Bonaventure says, "Mary has two sons, the Man-God, and pure man, and of both she is the mother, of the one corporally, of the other spiritually."† Thus, also, Blessed Albert the Great, teaches, that Mary is the "Mother of all who are reborn to life, and she is the mother of us all according to all the properties of maternity, because He was begotten of her, in whom all are regenerated."‡ And so also Abbot Guerric most beautifully writes: "She is the only virgin mother, who glories in having brought forth the only Begotten of the Father, who embraces her only Begotten in all His members, and who is not confounded at being called the mother of all those in whom she recognizes that her own Christ has been formed, or is in the course of

* Origen, in Joan. t. i.

† St. Bonaventure, quoted by de Montfort, True Devotion, p. 95.

‡ Beata Virgo est omnium nostrum Mater secundum omnes proprietates maternitatis, quia unum hominem genuit, in quo omnes regeneravit. Maria mater est omnium ad vitam renascentium.

formation."* And again, "if the servant of Christ is in labour again and again of his little children, ... until Christ be formed in them, how much more the Mother of Christ? For she herself desires to form her only Begotten in all the children of adoption.....and she is in labour of them daily.....until they meet into the perfect man, into the measure of the fulness of the age of her Son."† It is this beautiful thought then, which runs through both of de Montfort's Treatises on our Lady, and hardly an expression occurs in either of them which may not be found in other approved authors. As Christ was born of God the Holy Ghost and of Mary, so also He is formed by both in the souls of the regenerate; and as the Holy Ghost, according to what is a first principle in theology differs from the other divine Persons in having no divine fecundity, and can therefore only become fruitful by acting on created things, so it is by Mary that "He brings His fruitfulness into action, producing by her and in her, Jesus Christ in His members." What wonder

* Sermo I. in Assumpt. B.M.V.

† Sermo II. in Nativit. B.M.V.

then, that as He brooded over her with love unspeakable in her little house at Nazareth on that first midnight of the new creation, the heavenly Dove should also fly and find a resting-place in those elect souls in which Mary has taken root. For what, after all, is the great work of the sanctification of the souls of men, but the Incarnation of Christ in each of them, by which they are made "flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone;" and if, as Abbot Guerric remarks, St. Paul could say of his little children that "he was in labour of them, until Christ was formed in their hearts," and if, as Dr. Newman points out, he could say to the Corinthians that he had "begotten them in the gospel," and to Philemon that he had "begotten Onesimus in his bonds,"* why should any blame be cast upon the servant of God, for saying that Christ is formed in our souls by Mary, who is His Mother and our mother; and that she watches over His growth in us, and our growth in Him, until we grow "unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ," as lovingly and ten-

* Letter to Dr. Pusey, p. 107.

derly as she watched over Him, as He "advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men?"*

4. The manner of going to Communion recommended by de Montfort.—It must be carefully observed that the practice of communion recommended by the servant of God has nothing in common with the erroneous and dangerous devotion, grounded upon some supposed co-presence of our Lady in the B. Sacrament, which has been condemned by the Church. Nay, any such co-presence is expressly excluded by de Montfort's practice, by which he wishes us to invite our Lady spiritually to visit our souls, in order to enable us the better to welcome her Son. When we invite some friend to our house in order to meet a great and honoured guest, it is from the knowledge that the former will not come in company with the latter, and we invite him in order that by his presence we may be enabled to honour our guest the more. So is it, (mutatis mutandis) in the practice of communion recom-

* Beata Virginis ubera lac suum propinare non cessant, tota ista præsenti vita. Rich. a St. Laurent. de laud. B.M.V. l. iv. cap. xxiii.

mended by de Montfort. He would have us humble ourselves before God, and renouncing our own corrupt interior, and renewing our consecration to our Lady, implore her to come to our aid, and enable us to receive her Son with the same dispositions as her own. Then, receiving Jesus into our hearts, he would have us say, "I have held Him, and I will not let Him go, until I bring Him into my mother's house, and the chamber of her that bore me." He would have us "give Jesus to His Mother, who will receive Him lovingly, will enthrone Him honourably, will adore Him profoundly, will love Him perfectly, will embrace Him closely, and will render to Him, in spirit and in truth, many homages which are unknown to us in our thick darkness." And lastly, he would have us always remember, that the more we leave Mary to act in our communion, the more Jesus will be glorified, and the more will He act through Mary in our souls. Now it is very possible that there may be many minds who may not feel in any way attracted towards this practice of communion, or even positively distracted by it. By all means,

then, let not such persons attempt to follow it, for nothing could be farther from the translator's intention than to force any of the devotions or practices of the servant of God upon any soul; his only wish and hope is, that some may feel drawn towards them, and by their means may be enabled to keep the thought of Mary, more *habitually joined* with that of Jesus, at *all times* and in *all seasons*, for he feels sure that their only result can be a deeper and more solid union with Mary's Blessed Son.

No reader, surely, of the Lives of the Saints can have failed to observe how very frequently the thought of our Lady has been present to their minds during Mass and Holy Communion, and de Montfort is but following in their footsteps when he would have us, as it were, to receive Jesus in Holy Communion from His Mother's arms. Thus St. Bridget tells us, (I quote her words, not as a revelation, but simply as an example of the habitual tone of her mind illuminated by God the Holy Ghost,) that when the name of Mary is read in the Gospel the angels "rejoice in themselves and render thanks to God, who has given them so great a

grace and favour; and by Mary and with Mary, they see the humanity of her Son glorified in the Godhead."* And in another place she says that upon one occasion, after the consecration, she seemed to behold the Lamb of God, and sitting by His side a Virgin crowned, and all the angels and saints serving them: and after the souls of purgatory, and the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and Evangelists, had cried out for judgment upon the kings and princes of the earth, who were the causes of so many sins, she heard the Virgin that sat near the Lamb ask, not for judgment, but for pity, saying, "O my Lord and my sweet Jesus, have pity upon them!" And the Lamb heard her prayer, because it was not just that He should refuse her anything.† And again, B. Angela of Foligno relates that once, while she was hearing Mass, about the time of the consecration of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the people knelt down at the elevation, the most Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her, and said, "My daughter, dear to my Son and to me,

* Rev. lib. i. ix.

† Ibid. lib. viii. lvi.

my Son has now come to thee, and thou hast received His blessing, and it is fitting that I also should come to thee and give thee my blessing. Be thou then blessed by my Son and me." "I saw nothing," adds the servant of God, "in the Body of Christ at the elevation, as I had been wont to do, but I felt Christ truly in my soul."* Thus, too, St. Ignatius tells us that he could never say Mass without thinking of our Lady. These few examples taken from the Lives of the Saints will serve, I think, to throw light upon de Montfort's practice of Communion, and I may also add, of hearing Mass. We do not share, it is true, in the higher illumination of the Saints, who saw what we cannot see, and heard what our ears are too dull to hear, still in our measure we may profit by their instructions and example, and learn from them never to separate Mary from Jesus in our thoughts, even in the presence of that Blessed Sacrament of His Flesh and Blood, which for our sakes He took from her, and by which we are all made one together in Him. It

* B. Angela de Fulginio Visionum et Instructionum Liber. cap. 39. Coloniæ, Heberle 1851.

happened once, while Mass was being said, that B. Angela of Foligno was rapt in spirit, and asked of our Lord, saying, "'Behold, Lord, Thou art in this Sacrament of the altar, tell me, I pray Thee, where are Thy faithful?' And, opening my understanding, He answered and said, 'Where I am, there are My faithful with Me.' Then I saw that it was so, and most clearly I beheld that wherever He was, there I was also; yet not within God, but without, for He alone it is Who is everywhere, and in Whom are all things."*

5. The use of little chains.—It may first of all be remarked that the use of little chains as badges of our holy bondage to Jesus in Mary forms no essential part of the devotion. The servant of God speaks of it as "praiseworthy and very useful," but expressly says that "these external badges are not essential, and a person who has embraced this devotion may very well go without them." The

* B. Angela de Fulginio, Vis. et Instr Lib. cap. 43. I must again repeat that these revelations of the saints are not quoted as authorities, but simply in the way in which the Church would have us make use of them, as meditations of holy souls, enlightened by God the Holy Ghost, and as examples of their habitual tone of mind.

difficulty with regard to their use arises from the fact that in consequence, as Collet tells us,* of the chains having become ornaments of vanity, and having been profaned to even worse uses, the Confraternities of the Slaves of the Mother of God were everywhere abolished by a decree of the Holy Office in 1673, and their chains, pictures, medals, and books proscribed and prohibited. A decree to the same effect was placed in the Index by Benedict XIV., and in 1675 the Confraternities were suppressed by a Brief of Clement X. (Pastoralis officii.) Now, that the principle of the Holy Bondage could have been in any way condemned, or the substance of the devotion in any way touched, is simply impossible; for "how could the Roman Pontiffs," asks Collet, "have proscribed a devotion which they had authorized by their diplomas, and by the grant of indulgences, which has been embraced by several kingdoms, and the practice of which still sanctifies, daily, innumerable men and women of every condition of life?"† As we have

* Collet, Life of Boudon.

† Ibid.

already seen, several of the Popes had previously approved of the devotion. Thus, indulgences were granted to the slaves of our Lady by Gregory XV.; Urban VIII. having been consulted about the little chains worn by them, gave his approbation, and by the Bull of the 20th July 1651, (Cum sicut accepimus,) bestowed many indulgences upon the captives of the B. Virgin, as he called them, granting leave at the same time for the erection of confraternities. Pope Alexander VII., by a Bull of the 23rd June 1658, when applied to by the Discalced Augustinians of Provence, who wished to erect a confraternity of the slaves of our Lady at Marseilles, not only confirmed the indulgences granted by Urban, but communicated to them in addition all the indulgences of the great Confraternity of our Lady of the Pillar at Saragossa.* It is quite clear, therefore, that so far as the *substance* of the devotion is concerned, it cannot in any way be affected by the prohibitory decrees of the Holy Office and the Index, for as has been shown, it is impossible to sup-

* Boudon. Le Saint Esclavage.

pose that the Holy See could have condemned a devotion which only about twenty years before it had solemnly approved; and it is evident that the prohibition of the little chains could only have arisen from abuses external to the devotion itself, otherwise they would never have met with the approval of Pope Urban VIII., when consulted upon the subject. Again, the prohibitory decrees of the Holy Office and the Index were issued, and the abolition of the confraternities took place *before* the venerable servant of God wrote his Treatise on True Devotion to the B. Virgin, for it was not until 1701 that he received the priesthood, and he died in 1706. Now had there been anything wrong or unsound in the principle of his devotion, the mere fact of his having written a work advocating what had been condemned by the Church, would no doubt have proved a fatal impediment to his canonization. Yet, far from this being the case, we know that after a most careful examination of his writings, nothing contrary to the common sentiment or practice of the Church was discovered in them. We may therefore conclude for certain,

that it was some such abuses spoken of by Collet, and not anything in the devotion itself, which led to the prohibition of the chains, and the abolition of the confraternities. But a question has arisen, whether notwithstanding the decrees forbidding the use of little chains to confraternities, it is also forbidden to *private persons*. Upon the principle, that all penal enactments are to be interpreted strictly, the French Editor of his Treatise on the True Devotion seems to think that it is not, and the Editor of the English Translation published with the Imprimatur of the Archbishop of Dublin in 1864, although at first doubtful, seems to have arrived at the same conclusion. On the other hand, there are learned men of high position who are of opinion that this permission cannot be conceded. For myself, I do not wish to express any opinion. The matter may very well be left to the judgment of directors of souls, and the more so, as the use of these little chains, as we have seen, is in no way essential to the devotion. The day perhaps may come, after the servant of God has been raised to the honours of the altars, when the Holy

See may remove all prohibition as to their use; meanwhile, a simple rosary or scapular of our Lady worn round the neck, is quite a sufficient badge of our holy bondage.

One more difficulty remains to be noticed. How is it that if there be nothing new in the devotion recommended by the servant of God, he seems to speak as if it had been previously known to only a few of the saints, such as St. Ephrem, St. John Damascene, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, and St. Francis of Sales? The difficulty seems to me to be more apparent than real, and only another example of *non nova sed nove*. That the substance of his devotion is not new, he himself expressly states; for only a few pages after he had spoken of the comparatively few saints who have practised it, he gives his authorities for it, and says: "It is clear, then, that this devotion is not new; and that if it is not common, it is because it is too precious to be relished and practised by all the world."* His meaning seems to be this; that although almost all his statements

* True Devotion, p. 112.

may be justified by similar statements in the writings of holy and learned men, yet, except by a few of the saints, the *immense* importance of *self-consecration* to the Mother of God, and above all, the necessity of an *immense* increase of devotion to her had not been brought so prominently before the faithful, as he felt it was his mission to bring. Now although St. Ephrem, St. John Damascene, St. Bernard and the other saints whom he mentions, should, no doubt, be taken not so much as isolated witnesses, but as representatives of whole schools of thought, and of thousands of faithful disciples who followed their teaching, so that the more than ordinary devotion to the B. Virgin which they advocated may have been far more wide-spread than would at first sight appear; yet, after all, de Montfort comes before us to proclaim, (and it is this which is new,) that "he brings an authentic message from God about the greater honour, and wider knowledge, and more prominent love of His Blessed Mother" for which He is pressing, and "about her connexion with the second advent of her Son." If we bear in mind that he seems

to have been carried forward in spirit to the latter days, and to have seen those mighty saints, who "shall surpass," as he tells us, "most of the other saints, as much as the cedars of Lebanon outgrow the little shrubs," and whose formation and education is reserved for Mary, and that he was ever being urged on by the sharp goad of God, against which in his day, St. Paul found it so hard to kick, to teach and to preach ever more and more the reign of Mary upon the earth, we need not be surprised if sometimes he magnifies his ministry, and speaks of the message which God has given him as something hitherto unknown. Like St. Vincent Ferrer, who was sent by God to foreshadow the final judgment, and whose mantle seems to have fallen upon him, he sometimes utters words that cannot be measured by the standard of our calmer thought. I must not, however, conclude these remarks without pointing out a remarkable fulfilment of part of his prophecy in the birth of those new congregations of the servants of Mary in his own land of France, who in many respects seem to resemble the missionaries for

whom he poured forth such burning supplication in his prayer to the Holy Ghost. May the fulfilment of the rest follow soon. Fiat, fiat, amen, amen.

And now it only remains for the Translator to ask for the blessing of God and of His Holy Mother upon the Life and writings of Their servant in their English form, and upon all who may read them, that they may be to them what they have indeed been to him, "as when one is hid from the wind, and hideth himself from the storm, as rivers of waters in drought, and as the shadow of a rock which standeth out in a desert land." Imperfect as this translation is, may it be the means of helping forward some few souls to a deeper love of Mary, and through Mary of her most blessed Son, and of carrying out, in some poor way at least, the wishes of him, to whose holy memory it is dedicated. With his words, let this Preface end: "What an intense joy it is to resemble Jesus! How then ought we to cultivate this queenly grace of loving Mary! O happy you who have it, happier you who greatly prize it, happiest you who are all on fire with it, for it is a fire which Jesus

Himself has kindled in your hearts! The fair light of eternity, the terrible touch of God, the golden prophecies of a happy death, the cheerful securities of a joyous judgment are upon you. Happy, happy you! God be praised for your abounding happiness. But oh! unhappy souls, most unfortunate of men, most unfortunate and worst of all men, who are not yet victims of the eternal prison, who have not this devotion! There is much on earth which bears, and rightly, the title of misfortune; but of all God's creatures upon earth, they are the most unfortunate who have no devotion to God's Mother.

"Dearest brethren, there can be no repentance in heaven, else when we see Mary, we shall wish we had known her better, prayed to her oftener, and loved her more; for we shall see brighter places than our own, farther forward in the glory of heaven, where we might have been, had we loved her more!

"O we who call earth our exile, and heaven our home, how is it that we do not see, that there can be no heavenly-mindedness, which is not full of loyalty to heaven's great queen?

"There are cold shallow controversies on earth, about our Lady's greatness, while at this hour the great St. Michael is gazing on her throne with a rapture of astonishment, a delighted rapture which will grow to all eternity."*

* Notes on Doctrinal and Spiritual Subjects.

Feast of the Purification of B. V. M. 1870.

APPROBATION OF THE FIRST FRENCH EDITION, BY THE BISHOP OF LUCON.

We, René-François, by the grace of God, and the authority of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Luçon:

Having seen the report which we had ordered to be drawn up, and presented to us with regard to a manuscript which had been submitted for our approval, entitled: "Life of Venerable Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, Missionary Apostolic, and Founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Ghost, of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, and of that of the Daughters of Wisdom," do hereby approve of the same, and earnestly desire that it should be printed and published. The description, as true as it is touching, which it gives of the heroic virtues of the Venerable Missionary, whose ashes repose in our diocese, and whose holy Congregations are the glory of our Episcopate, cannot fail to edify both the priests and the faithful committed to our charge. They will, no doubt, be moved by feelings of great admiration, and generous emulation, when they read the innumerable proofs of the truly Apostolic zeal which evangelized our provinces with such marvellous success, the charity which multiplied itself in proportion to the wants of others, and the love of crosses which characterised the whole life of that great servant of God.

Given at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre in our Diocese, under our Sign-Manual, our seal, and the counter-seal of our Secretary, this twenty-fourth of August, 1839.

✠ René-François, Bishop of Luçon,

for Monsigneur,

R. Biton, D. Pro-Secretary.

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION.

If it is useful, in order to acquire the spirit of the saints, to study the history of their lives, it is also useful, in order to understand their history, to have first of all somewhat of their spirit. Indeed, the thoughts of the saints, like those of our Lord, are as far removed from the thoughts of the world, as the heavens are above the earth, and "the sensual man," says St. Paul, "perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined." * But there are certain holy lives which present to the "sensual man" a more than ordinary obscurity, because God in His providence has thought fit to show forth in them the holy folly of the cross. The lives of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Simeon

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Salo, St. Philip Neri, St. Felix of Cantalicio, and so many others, will never be understood except by a Christian. So also will it be with the Life which we now offer to the public. From his earliest years Montfort had heard Jesus Christ in the Gospel beatify poverty, suffering, and humiliation, and he took Him at His word. From that time, like St. Paul, he knew no other science, he wished for no other glory, save the science and glory of the cross. In exchange for the honour which he endeavoured to procure for God, he only asked humiliation for himself. "To Thee, O Lord our God, be mercy and forgiveness, to us confusion of face."

If, then, his life presents certain facts, certain strange expressions, far from us be the thought of trying in any way to justify them, or to palliate anything in his conduct which may be displeasing to the world. We should be wanting not only in faithfulness, as historians, whose duty it is to paint historical characters in their proper colours, but also in respect, both for the memory of this holy priest, in appearing to be ashamed of his conduct, and for the honour of the Holy Ghost Himself, who,

not without a particular design, has shown forth such extraordinary sanctity to His Church. We shall, no doubt, be able to explain certain circumstances of his life, either by taking the former Lives of the servant of God, and comparing them together, or by throwing new light upon the subject, from authentic and inedited documents. Thus, the appearance of levity and fickleness given to him by his numerous journeys will be effaced, and the exaggerated opinions weakened, which many have formed of his singularity. Thus, too, many other shadows will disappear, which, to not a few eyes, disfigure the picture of his admirable life. But we should reproach ourselves as guilty of a crime, were we to add or retrench the slightest circumstance, or the least phrase, with the mere object of "conforming ourselves," (contrary to the apostle's prohibition), "to the spirit of this world." It is not for us to lower the saints to our level, but to lift ourselves to the height of the saints; to them it belongs to judge and to condemn the world.

This history will not contain anything which does not rest upon most authentic

testimony. One of the authorities of which we have made most use in its composition, is M. des Bastières, who gave nearly fifty missions in company with Montfort, and whose naïve descriptions interest us all the more, because he speaks as an eye witness. A very detailed memoir by M. Blain, the school-fellow of the holy missionary, and afterwards Canon of Rouen, contains also a great number of valuable facts. Immediately after the death of Montfort, M. Grandet, at that time Curé of Sainte Croix, at Angers, afterwards director of the Seminary of that city, and a member of the congregation of Saint Sulpice, lost no time in paying him the same honour, which he had paid to certain other holy priests of that period, by writing their lives. These Lives consist of four volumes; the manuscripts of which are kept in the Seminary of St. Sulpice, at Paris. That of Montfort, which he published in 1724, is no doubt imperfect, but it has the great merit of containing the text of several interesting letters which are not to be found elsewhere. In 1775, there appeared a new Life of Montfort, by M. Picot de Clorivière, Rector of Paramé,

near St. Malo. This holy priest had belonged to the Company of Jesus before its suppression, and after its re-establishment, he became one of its provincials. He made use, in the composition of the Life of Montfort, both of all anterior writings, and especially of a very detailed account, composed at the expense of much time and labour by M. Besnard, one of the successors of the holy missionary. Independently of the assistance derived from these sources, we have also availed ourselves of several authentic manuscripts, such as the autograph letters preserved in the Seminary of St. Sulpice.

Besides having verified, and, when necessary, rectified the different details of this Life, as well as completed it by means of inedited documents, and by a continuation of the facts connected with it up to our own days, we have endeavoured to arrange it in a better and clearer order, than was to be met with in any former Life.

And now to whom are we to dedicate this work? That of M. Grandet begins by an offering and prayer to Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Priest, and Pastor of our

souls. It is with pleasure that we borrow the beautiful words of this holy author.

"There is no one, O my Jesus, to whom more than to Thee, I ought to dedicate the life of a holy priest, and zealous missionary; to Thee, the Sovereign Priest, and the heavenly missioner whom Thy Father has sent down from heaven upon earth, to procure His glory, and the sanctification of sinners. Thy election, Thy vocation, and Thy mission have been the principle of the election and vocation and mission of all Thy holy priests, and apostolic missioners. Like Thee, they have been chosen from all eternity to work for the glory of God. Like Thee, they have been called to the priesthood to offer with Thee, and through Thee the adorable sacrifice of Thy Body and Blood. Like Thee, they have been given to Thy Church, to be Thy vicars and vicegerents, and fellow-workers in the great work of the salvation of mankind. The priest, O my Jesus, whose life I have written for Thy children, united in himself all these marks of Thy Election and Vocation and Mission; for Thou hast shed so many benedictions upon his labours, that we cannot doubt that Thou

Thyself wert the principle of all his actions. But Thy life was also the model of his life. If he was evil spoken of, humbled, and persecuted, he did but in this the more resemble Thee, and it seems as if Thou hast given this holy priest to Thy Church, as a rare example of a poor, humble, mortified and crucified life, in order to teach ecclesiastics living in the world to fly, like him, from a slothful, soft, useless, idle, and self-interested life, which is enough to make them lose their souls. Grant, O divine Jesus, that the abundant grace which Thou hast shed upon the actions and words of Thy servant, while he was alive, may still continue to be shed after his death upon this history of his actions, and that they who read of them may be inflamed with the desire of working, as he worked, for the salvation of poor souls, that are perishing for want of labourers. Grant that this missionary may speak to them out of his grave, and say to them, like the good householder, 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?'

"Grant, O my Saviour, that Thy servant may do after his death, what he could not do when he was alive; that he may fly, as

he so much wished to do, throughout the world, to preach to the people of the earth the knowledge of God Alone, the hatred of sin, detachment from the world and its vain pleasures, the obligation of doing penance, of self-renunciation, and of daily carrying the cross both in secret and in public, as he carried his own. Amen, Amen. Fiat, Fiat. This is the grace which the author of his life asks of Thee, for himself and for his readers."

In conclusion, we would protest with M. Picot de Clorivière, in conformity with the Decree of Urban VIII., "that when we have given the name of Saint to Montfort, or to any other persons of high virtue, or when we have spoken of miracles, or other extraordinary events, we have only done so in accordance with the usage of ordinary language, without meaning, in any way, to anticipate the judgment of the Church."

GOD ALONE!

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LIFE

OF

LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT.

BOOK I.

FROM THE BIRTH OF LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT, IN 1673, TO HIS PROMOTION TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN 1700.

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE BIRTH OF LOUIS, IN 1673, TO THE END OF HIS COURSE OF RHETORIC, IN 1691.

THE divine fruitfulness of the Christian priesthood was not exhausted in giving to France, almost at the same time, a crowd of saintly priests, worthy of the most glorious ages of the Church. The age which produced St. Vincent de Paul, de Berulle, Olier, and Bourdoise, was not to close without also producing a man who may be compared with the greatest saints for his virtues, and with the apostles for the immense success of his ministry. Such a man was he whose life we are about to write.

Louis-Marie Grignon* de la Bacheleraie, more commonly called de Montfort, was born on the

* It is sometimes written *Grignion*, and is spelt in this way in the last edition of his "Secret de Marie," published at Poitiers, 1869.

31st of January, 1673, in the little town of Montfort-la-Canne, then in the diocese of Saint-Malo, now in that of Rennes. His father, Jean Baptiste Grignon, Sieur de la Bacheleraie, advocate to the Bailliage of Montfort, and his mother, Jeanne de la Visuelle-Robert, were both of noble family, but little favoured with the goods of fortune. They had eight children: he of whom we speak was the eldest. The name of Louis was given to him in baptism; but his devotion to the Mother of God made him desirous of bearing her name as well, and this favour was granted him at his confirmation. It was also from a spirit of piety that, in accordance with the practice of certain religious orders, he substituted at a later period the name of Montfort, the place of his birth, for that of his family. He wished, in thus changing his name, as our Saviour Himself had done with the names of some of His disciples, to show to all the world, and to continually remind himself, that he was dead to earth, and could no longer listen to the voice of flesh and blood.

From his earliest infancy Louis showed such a horror of sin, and so great a leaning to virtue, that it might almost be said that he was a stranger to the sin of Adam, and unconscious of the corruption of nature. None of those things which amuse childhood, or charm even the riper years of manhood, seemed to touch his heart; all his tastes were heavenly. The words, *God Alone*, afterwards so familiar to him, seemed even then to be graven on his soul; his actions, his words, breathed of nothing else. For him there was no sweeter pleasure than prayer. Never did he find too long the time which he passed in church. For whole hours he might have been seen upon his knees, occupied only with Him Who alone could have taught him, at so tender an age,

to pray in spirit and in truth. Devotion to the Mother of God, was, all his life long, the distinctive characteristic of his piety. Mary was, as it were, *inborn* in him; and it might have been said, that the Holy Virgin, having herself first chosen him, had impressed upon his young soul the singular tenderness which he always felt for her. From his earliest years he announced what he would one day become; the zealous panegyrist of Mary, the indefatigable preacher of devotion to the Mother of God. When before one of her images, he seemed to lose the use of his senses, and to have no other thoughts but to honour her, and consecrate to her his innocence. This was in him not a mere passing devotion, as in so many other children; each day did but make it more tender and more active. He was in the habit of calling Mary his *mother*, his *good mother*, his *dear mother;* he made known to her with child-like simplicity all his temporal and spiritual wants; and his confidence in her was so great that in his opinion all was done when he had prayed to his good mother. Those who knew best all the circumstances of his life, attest, that in reality, Mary never ceased to watch over her servant, and to lead him, as it were, by the hand in all his ways.

This lively piety with which his heart was filled, this tender love for holy things, and particularly for the Queen of Virgins, he knew, with admirable skill, how to communicate to other children. He often spoke to them of God, helped them to learn the catechism, or read to them little pious works. If ever any dispute arose amongst them, he hastened to reconcile them, and sacrificed, if needful, his own pleasures, because for him nothing was of so great importance as to see God faithfully served. One of his sisters, named

Louise, whom he loved most tenderly, because he found her in disposition most like himself, experienced more than any one the effects of his zeal. He associated her with him in his practices of devotion, recited the Rosary with her, and spoke with her of God and of His service. If ever she showed any repugnance he encouraged her by little presents. When, on the other hand, he saw her of her own free will give herself to the practice of virtue, he hardly knew by what caresses to testify to her his joy. His mother, too, had her share in the graces which filled this child of benediction. When only four or five years of age, if ever he saw her in grief for any household trouble, he would go to her and console her, and encourage her to patience; but in words so full of unction, and so far above the natural intelligence of a child, that only the Spirit of God could have put them into his mouth. It was thus that in his most tender years he gave promise of those apostolic functions which were to sanctify a great part of his life.

Louis' piety was too real and too regular to leave anything to be desired in the fulfilment of his duties. He seized every occasion of testifying to his parents his respect and submission. He anticipated their least wishes, and performed for them, as also for his brothers and sisters, all the services he was able. Although his father was of a naturally violent temper, and was sometimes, in dealing with him, carried away by it to excess, yet he never failed in respect, nor uttered a complaint. These feelings were no doubt inspired by the goodness of his heart, but far more by the faith which even then caused him to regard his parents as the depositaries of the authority of God. Nor was his conduct different with regard to the masters who were charged with his early

instruction. They have themselves declared that he never gave them trouble, and that he had always affectionately fulfilled his duties, without requiring to be forced either by threat or chastisement. Like young Tobias, "he kept from his infancy the law of the Lord." Nothing which was displeasing to God ever seemed to him of light moment; thus he was never seen, in the midst of other children, giving himself up, as they did, to a number of those little failings, which are so easily pardoned at their early age. "The path of the just," says the wise man, "as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth, even to perfect day."*

And thus it was, that while Louis was as yet a child, it was possible to foresee the high degree of grace and virtue to which this chosen soul was one day to be raised.

He was twelve years old when his father, seeing his happy disposition, placed him at Rennes, in order that he might the better pursue his studies. The college of that city was then flourishing under the direction of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, and its students found in it all the necessary means for advancing both in learning and in holiness. The new pupil knew how to turn these to profit. He applied so well to his studies that his masters took pleasure in proposing him as a model to his school-fellows; and he showed at the same time so many good qualities that he every year carried off the first prizes in his class; but his progress in virtue was even more rapid still.

His goodness soon merited for him his reception into the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin, which was composed of the most fervent of the scholars, and in which holy exhortations, reading

* Prov. iv. 18.

of good books, recitation of the Office of our Lady, mental prayer, and frequent reception of the Sacraments, were all made use of for the maintenance of holiness. It thus turned out every year a number of young men, who either consecrated themselves to the service of the altar, or, remaining in the midst of the world, edified it by their virtues. It was a great joy for Louis to see himself attached by still closer ties to the service of her whom he had always regarded as his mother, and no one was ever more faithful in the discharge of these holy duties.

But all these means of salvation were not enough to satisfy the immense desire of the fervent scholar to make daily progress in the path to heaven. There was at that time at Rennes, a holy priest, who was in the habit of assembling in his house certain young men for the purpose of encouraging them in piety. After this, he would send them to the hospitals to wait upon the sick, or read to them and teach them the catechism. Louis was one of the number, and showed even then his tender affection for the poor. Instead of joining in the frivolous amusements of the other students, it was at the hospital that he passed a part of his holidays. The remainder of the time he spent in complete retirement, drawing being almost the only amusement in which he ever indulged. Hitherto without a master, and guided only by his own natural taste, he would amuse himself by copying some holy picture with which he chanced to meet, and which struck him as well designed; and he succeeded so well in this that a Councillor of Parliament once offered him a louis for one of his copies. This money he employed in taking lessons of a painter. With his brilliant imagination and natural taste, he would no doubt have excelled in painting, had his more

serious occupations allowed him to cultivate this talent. Nevertheless, what he then learnt was by no means useless to him, for he often afterwards turned it to good account in the missions, for the decoration of churches.

His father having come to reside at Rennes for some length of time, in order the more easily to provide for the education of his other children, young Louis found in this event an occasion of exercising the virtues and talents with which he was endowed. He acted as tutor to his brothers, and paid great attention to this employment, without, however, neglecting his own advancement. He fulfilled every duty in an admirable manner; and these new cares, instead of interfering with his holiness, served, on the contrary, to make it more solid.

Almighty God, in His providence, had found for the director of his conscience a man well capable of encouraging the holy dispositions which He had Himself inspired. This was Père Descartes, author of the little book entitled "The Palace of Divine Love," which he composed in his old age. This director, as able as he was holy, knew how to appreciate the soul which had been confided to him, and gave him his whole attention. The examples and lessons which he received from his regent of rhetoric, Père Gilbert, were also of great use to him. This excellent master, who, some years afterwards, passed into foreign countries, where he spent his life in apostolic labours, let no occasion escape of directing his scholars towards holiness. Unfortunately, among the many young men who composed his class, there were but few who profited by his instructions. The greater part paid no attention to them, and even took pleasure in trying his patience; but their insults, although every day renewed, could not

change his sweetness. Touched by this example, Louis admired in his master a virtue of which he was himself, one day, to become so perfect a model. The master, on his side, had a singular esteem for his fervent pupil, and regarded him even then as a saint. This opinion he himself, shortly before leaving for the missions, made known to M. Blain, one of Louis' schoolfellows, and afterwards doctor of the Sorbonne, and Canon of Rouen.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE END OF LOUIS' RHETORIC, IN 1691, TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR PARIS, IN 1693.

After finishing his humanities, Louis entered upon his course of philosophy. In proportion with his advance in learning, his virtue also made itself known, by still more characteristic signs. We have only space for one amongst a thousand. Among the scholars who followed with him the course of logic, there was one so poor and badly dressed that he was the object of the contempt and laughter of the others. Louis, without being asked, undertook to procure for him more suitable clothes, and begged the money necessary for this purpose of the charity of his schoolfellows. The sum which he received was far from sufficient, and it was out of his power to make up what was wanting. But charity is ingenious; he went with the poor student to a tailor, and said, "Here is my brother and yours: I have collected in my class what I could in order to clothe him; if that is not enough you must add the rest."

These words had their effect; charity begets charity: the tailor did what had been asked of him with so much simplicity, and the poor scholar was clothed, to the great astonishment of his schoolfellows, who began from that time to venerate the author of this good deed.

Let us hear how one of their number, M. Blain, of whom we have already spoken, bears testimony to Louis' virtues. "In a class of four hundred students, (he tells us), M. Grignon appeared a model of goodness. Even then he gave himself up to exercises of prayer and penance; and could find no pleasure in anything but God. All those pleasures in which youth finds so many charms, were to him insipid. He could not speak of them, nor had he even any idea of them; for his whole childhood had been passed in admirable innocence, and in utter ignorance of evil. So little did he know of anything that could interfere with purity, that one day when I spoke to him of temptations against this virtue, he told me that he did not know what they meant. No sooner did he understand the meaning of perfection, than he conceived for it a most ardent desire. However painful, however narrow might be the way, he was to be seen walking along it with rapid step, and with so much courage, that he never seemed to meet with any thorn, or, at least, never to feel its prick. Whatever is most heroic and most sublime in virtue, seemed to him only natural, so eminent was his grace. He had but entered upon his career, and already he had left the most advanced far behind him. To the most profound recollection, to continual prayer, to the most austere penance, and to mortification of every kind, he joined, a peace, a sweetness, a tranquillity of soul which I never saw ruffled in the midst of contradictions and the most painful humiliations. Disciplines,

iron chains, and other like instruments of mortification, were at once made use of, as soon as they came to his knowledge. He kept such a watch upon all his senses, that not an inconsiderate gesture or look, or word, could be discovered in his behaviour. His eyes were almost always lowered; and the air of holiness which spread over his face and his whole person, already marked him out in some sort from among the rest, and distinguished him from his school companions."

A more perfect knowledge of the grandeurs of Mary, caused his devotion to her to become every day more solid and enlightened. Never did he fail in going to class, to enter the church of the Carmelites, and he often remained kneeling a considerable time before an ancient and miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin. His piety did not go unrewarded. It was in that place, as he himself confessed, that the knowledge of his vocation to the ecclesiastical state was granted to him, a knowledge so clear and certain, that he had even no need to make it the subject of any further deliberation.

From that day, his only thought was to render himself worthy, as far as was possible, of a vocation of which he had formed the highest idea. He was persuaded that the soldier of Christ on entering His service, contracted the strictest obligation of renouncing every interest capable of soiling, or even dividing the heart; that he entered upon an engagement to live only for God, and to seek only His glory; in a word, that the priest, *Alter Christus*, another Christ, must, like his divine Model, be full of holy charity, and be always ready to sacrifice himself, in order to enkindle its flame throughout the world. On these sublime ideas he ruled his conduct; and if his life till then had been very innocent and pure, it became hence-

forth altogether supernatural, and full of heroism. He resolved to listen only to the Gospel, and in all things to have no other rule of esteem or contempt, of sorrow or of joy.

"It was at this time," says M. Blain, "that is to say, during the vacation which followed his course of physics, that having gone with him on a visit to the house of a common friend, I began to know him more intimately. His conversations were only of God and of the things of God; and already his heart, unable to contain itself, sought only to pour itself out upon his neighbour by effectual proofs of charity. Often he would hide himself from our eyes, in order to go in secret and embrace and caress some poor deformed beggar whom nature had unkindly dealt with. He would throw himself at the beggar's feet, and kiss them, if he thought he was out of the sight of men. But he could not hide himself well enough to prevent me surprising him in these holy transports of charity. Of this charity he gave another proof at his father's country house, called Bois Marquet, where I saw him, on a passing visit. His father had in his house a book full of obscene pictures; for a long time this chaste Joseph had with difficulty suffered this occasion of impurity to remain in his house, but the fear of his father's violence had hitherto prevented him exposing himself to his anger, by throwing the book into the fire. At last, his zeal having increased with his years, he thought he had found the moment for depriving the devil of his weapons. Finding himself alone in the house, he destroyed the infamous book, resolved to suffer every kind of ill-treatment at his father's hands, if what he had done should come to his knowledge. The holy young man had just destroyed the book, when I found him in the house, timid and almost trembling for fear of his father,

but in other respects well satisfied with the sacrifice which he had accomplished. He then showed me in his garden certain retired spots suitable for prayer, where it was his pleasure to pass the greater part of his time in this holy exercise. He seemed to me so full of God, so penetrated with His love, and the desire of his own perfection, that I remained equally confused and edified."

At the end of this vacation so holily spent, Louis commenced his theological studies with the intention of completing them in the same college in which he had made all his other studies with so much success. This would have been the natural course, and his parents' fortune was too small to allow them to look to any other college for their son. But Providence called him to the school of the very highest ecclesiastical perfection, in a house where he who wishes to become a saint finds its most perfect models, and most enlightened guides.

A lady, named Mademoiselle de Montigny, had lately come from Paris to Rennes upon business, and was lodging in his father's house. Everything which this lady related about the seminaries of St. Sulpice, of which as yet he had not heard, of the sanctity of M. Olier who had founded them about fifty years before, of the edifying life led within their walls, and of the great number of fervent ecclesiastics who every year went out from them to evangelize France, made a strong impression upon Louis. He conceived a great desire of entering so holy a school: full of ardour and confidence, he prayed to our Lord that his desire might be granted; and He who had inspired the prayer, was not slow in hearing it. Mademoiselle de Montigny on her return to Paris, wrote to his family, to say, that she would find the means of

satisfying the desire which young Louis had of entering the seminary, and that he might set out on his journey as soon as he pleased. His father agreed without any difficulty to so advantageous an offer, and his son, seeing in it the ordering of an ever-watchful and merciful Providence, confidently began his journey, the expenses of which were defrayed by the lady we have just mentioned. "He immediately set out, (says M. Blain,) so full of detachment from his home and family, that in losing sight of them, he seemed also to lose the remembrance of them: not that he was hard-hearted or insensible, for he had as tender a heart as any one, but the love of God stifled in him the voice of nature, and lifted up all his desires and thoughts to heaven. That these evangelical sentiments and sublime dispositions which I attribute to him had no mere existence in my own imagination, but were really the workings of his own heart, may be seen from a letter which he wrote to me from Paris, exhorting me to come and join him in his search for virtue, far away from my parents and home, in a place where, banished from the world, it seemed to have taken refuge..... The lively and animated terms in which he wrote, the pathetic expressions, so full of unction which were natural to him, faithfully interpreted his inward feelings, and at once carried away the hearts of those who read his letters. I must myself avow, that they served me for spiritual reading, and that nothing ever touched me more. In a few words he made me feel the necessity of quitting my family, in order to serve God in freedom, and he caused an ardent desire of this to spring up in my heart. *Egredere*, (he wrote to me,) *de cognatione tua, et vade in terram quam monstrabo tibi.* He paraphrased these words of the Sacred Text so energetically and devoutly, as

to make it clear enough, that God had spoken these words to his heart, as He had done to Abraham, and had taught him their meaning.

"For the expenses of his journey and his stay at Paris, he only received ten crowns: so that he was compelled by necessity as well as induced by virtue, to undertake the journey on foot. The distance from Rennes to Paris is reckoned at seventy-six leagues; but the desire of evangelical perfection, which would have made him go to the end of the world, did not allow him to see any difficulty in so painful a journey. Besides, this journey being his first, was to be also the model of so many others, which zeal for the salvation of souls would one day cause him to undertake. What I mean is, that it was necessary for him to show himself to be an apostle, in poverty, humiliation, weariness, and more than all, in abandonment to the Providence of God. It was this last virtue which I most admired in him at his departure; and in wishing him farewell, he seemed to me so utterly detached, so assured of receiving what was needful, so determined to swallow down, if I may be excused the expression, the shame of asking alms, if the occasion required it, that I imagined one of the apostles, or early apostolic men to have been born again. With his eyes often raised to heaven, his heart at St. Sulpice, the name of Mary ever on his lips; it was thus that he set out from Rennes, and arrived happily at the end of eight or ten days at Paris, for he was then strong, and walked with ease. Great, however, was the fatigue which he had to undergo in so long a journey, as it never ceased to rain all the while; but more than all, he had to suffer humiliations, to which, as yet, he could not have been accustomed. Many persons, whose assist-

ance he asked, either refused him, or made him pay dearly for it."

After so much fatigue and trouble, we should naturally have expected him to have first of all taken some rest, and then to have hastened to admire the marvels which daily attracted to Paris so many strangers. Far from having any desire of sight-seeing, he did not even allow himself to fix his eyes upon any object of curiosity which presented itself upon his way; and what he did then, he did all his life. During all the time he spent in Paris, never did he take one step to satisfy his curiosity. He always walked with his eyes modestly cast down; so that, after having lived there many years, he left Paris without having seen any of the more celebrated sights. He had eyes only for objects of devotion, but for these he was ever on the watch. Men were astonished to see him salute the images of Mary, which were sometimes placed so high above the doorways that it was necessary to look twice in order to perceive them. He seemed to have a sort of instinct and sympathy by which he discovered them.

CHAPTER III.

FROM LOUIS' ARRIVAL AT PARIS IN 1693, TO HIS ENTERING THE SEMINARY OF ST. SULPICE IN 1695.

Although we do not know exactly the time when our holy traveller substituted the name of Montfort for his own name of de Bacheleraie, yet we cannot, perhaps, find a better place for this change, than at a time when, in separating himself from his family, he seemed to wish to divorce himself from it for ever.

As soon as he had arrived at Paris, the charitable lady, whom God in His providence had made use of to bring him there, conducted him, not to the Seminary of St. Sulpice, but to a small community, founded a few years before, for poor young ecclesiastics, by M. Le Battu de la Barmondière, formerly Curé of Saint Sulpice. De Montfort was admitted on the promise that a modest pension should be paid for him. All that the venerable superior had heard of his new pupil caused him to receive him with great joy; on his side, the virtuous young man was not less charmed with all he saw in his superior and fellow students. He ceased not to bless our Lord for having brought him into so holy a house. He thought himself in a paradise, where, detached from every care, he had only to busy himself in making himself fit and ready to glorify his Father Who was in heaven. It was in this sense that he expressed himself in a letter which he wrote to his parents a few days after his arrival, to tell them of the fact, and to beg of them to

help him in thanking God for the graces He had bestowed upon him during his journey.

This joy was soon interrupted. At the end of a few months the pension which had been promised ceased to be paid; and Montfort, who had already received the tonsure, saw himself upon the point of being sent away. This appeared to be a matter of necessity in a year of scarcity, during which the community could hardly find means of subsistence, and the misery was so great at Paris that the charity of the rich did not suffice for the wants of the poor. A trial such as this would have alarmed any other than our young cleric. What was to become of him? What was he to do under these circumstances, far away from his family, without resources, and deprived of every kind of support? Such were the questions put to him, and the only answer he gave was to the effect, that as yet he had not thought about the matter, and that he only wished to lean upon his Heavenly Father. This answer was in perfect conformity with his feelings. Never did a man practise more strictly to the letter the Gospel maxim, which forbids us to take thought for the morrow. Accustomed long since to see all things in God, he had no other thought but to conform himself lovingly to His adorable Will as soon as it was made known to him, and he rested, without care, as upon a mother's bosom, upon the Providence of God. So Christian a confidence could not fail to be rewarded. The good superior consented to keep young Montfort; but it was decided that, along with certain others, he should be employed in keeping watch over the parish dead from their death to their burial, and that the stipend attached to this office should stand instead of pension. The humility of the young seminarist caused him to accept with gratitude, an arrangement which many

others would have looked upon as very painful. He gave himself up, without reserve, to all the designs of Providence, and without a fear that it would ever fail him.

Even this was still too little for his insatiable desire of mortification. He added to it austerities, which might perhaps have been blamed, had he not submitted the whole of his conduct to the prudence of his director, who was no other than M. de la Barmondière. This wise guide found hardly anything in his pupil to reform; he saw in him one of those souls whose guidance the Holy Ghost seems to have reserved to Himself. Assured of Montfort's profound humility and perfect obedience, he did not think himself bound to restrain him within the ordinary laws, and he left him to be the judge of his own penances. The fervent seminarist was then in robust health, and the fear of lessening his strength never presented itself to his mind, except as one of those dangerous illusions, which are carefully to be avoided, if we wish to walk with rapid steps in the path of virtue. The example of a great number of the saints, caused him to believe that, with the grace of God, it is possible to do what is impossible by nature. As soon as he heard of a mortification practised by any of the saints, it was enough to make him suppose that God demanded it of him. Disciplines to blood daily repeated, hair-shirts, sharp pointed girdles, and armlets of iron, all these penances were employed in succession, and never did he cease for a moment to bear about in his flesh the mortification of Jesus Christ.

The watching by the side of the dead, which was often renewed as many as three or four times in the course of the week, must, without doubt, be placed in the rank of the severest austerities, especially when we consider the way in which he

acquitted himself of the task. He never made use of the refreshments which it was the custom to offer to those who passed the night in watching; and yet the extreme frugality observed in the establishment of M. de la Barmondière, must have made this alleviation almost indispensable; but it would have seemed quite a superfluity to our pious seminarist, who already found the food of the community too good and too abundant, and who therefore daily deprived himself of whatever food seemed to be the best. Arrived at the place where he had to pass the night, he set himself at once to pray, without allowing his eyes to rest upon any objects of curiosity which might be found in the apartments, although he had sometimes to keep watch in the finest mansions of Paris; and he generally remained four hours upon his knees, engaged in this holy exercise. He then devoted two hours to spiritual reading; the two following he gave to sleep, and the remainder of the time he employed in the study of his theological notes, which he had taken during his lectures at the Sorbonne, along with the rest of the community.

Such was the order which the virtuous student observed in his watches. In the school, and, so to speak, in the presence of death, he contemplated at his leisure the nothingness of all human things. He penetrated more and more into the great truths, which in after years he knew so powerfully how to treat, so well how to instil into the most hardened hearts. He followed in spirit the departed souls to the tribunal of the Judge; he listened to the trial of their good and evil actions, and to the exact account which they had to render for the graces they had received. Nor did he fail to apply to himself the reflections to which these subjects gave birth in his mind.

Sometimes, in order that they might make a

more lively impression, he even fixed his eyes upon the faces of the dead by whose side he was watching. This sight had a great effect upon him; it was, as it were, a mirror in which he clearly perceived the shortness of life, and the end to which all earthly hopes must come at last. Two especially of these dead bodies spoke to his heart in a way which he never afterwards forgot. One was that of a gentleman of high rank, who, upon leaving a place of debauch, had been mortally wounded. The corruption of his body was so great, that, the next day, the bearers were unable to endure the stench. The other was that of one of the first ladies of the court, famous for her beauty, but so disfigured by death, that, at the end of twenty-four hours, nothing more hideous could be seen. Full of these thoughts, the virtuous young man blessed God for his state of life, attached himself more and more to poverty, and found light, indeed, the mortifications which he imposed upon himself, or which came to him from other sources.

Notwithstanding his austerities and the fatiguing mortifications of which we have been speaking, he was no less careful to give to the study of theology whatever time and care were considered necessary. He understood that without learning, even were he raised to the most sublime perfection, he could never completely correspond to his vocation, and God so blessed his labours, that M. de la Barmondière did not hesitate to prefer him, even in matter of learning, to the most advanced members of the community. It was, doubtless, in order to apply more closely to his studies, that he now became desirous of renouncing for ever the pursuit of architecture, painting, and sculpture, which he had practised from his childhood. Nevertheless, his superior, who was not ignorant

of his talents in this respect, was of opinion that it would be good for him to cultivate them, and proposed to furnish him with the means, when he was taken away by death from the community, of which he had been the sole support.

Young Montfort had decided, through obedience, to receive the minor orders, and, in order to prepare himself for their reception, had gone, as it was then the custom of the diocese of Paris, to make a retreat with the priests of the mission, at St. Lazare. By letters dimissorial of the Bishop of St. Malo, he was ordained on Ember Saturday, 18th September, 1694. It was during this absence that M. de la Barmondière fell sick and died. On his return, he was at once, and without any preparation, informed of the sad news; for the others were desirous of seeing how he would receive it. All, indeed, were aware that he had lost in this worthy superior, a temporal as well as a spiritual father, and that this loss would leave him without any support, face to face with a future which nature would find it very hard to bear. The blow seemed crushing; but if Montfort was surprised, he was not troubled by it, and it was seen on this occasion that nothing could shake the confidence of one who had put all his hope in God alone. The calm and peace which he then knew how to preserve, arose neither from ungrateful insensibility, nor ostentatious virtue. A letter, which he wrote under these circumstances, to an uncle who was a priest at Rennes, furnishes us with a proof of this. After having paid to M. de la Barmondière the respect which he owed to his virtues, and the tribute of gratitude which all the benefits he had received from him required, he thus spoke of the state of uncertainty in which he found himself placed: "I feel no embarrassment, (he said), for I have in heaven a

Father who can never fail me. He brought me here; He will ever allow me to experience His ordinary mercy, although for my sins I only deserve chastisement at His hands."

Nevertheless, the blow which had struck the shepherd, dispersed the flock; the community of M. de la Barmondière ended with his life, and every one placed himself as best he could. Those who had any resources of their own, entered the seminaries of St. Sulpice. Montfort would have willingly followed them, but the time, marked by Providence, had not yet come; he had yet to pass through a trial, which for any one else would have been hard indeed. The little community of M. Boucher was thrown open to him, and he thought himself very happy in being admitted. Everything there was calculated to satisfy his taste for poverty and mortification. No wine was used, the meats which were served were of the most repulsive kind, and, however great the appetite, it was almost impossible to partake of them without repugnance, so that the meal-times seemed designed rather for torment than for nourishment. The badness of the food, joined to continual study, succeeded in destroying the health of the young student, which his austerities and watches had already considerably weakened. In this establishment, all the students took their turn in the kitchen; and when it came to Montfort's turn, he acquitted himself of the task without at all diminishing his ordinary penances. It happened, however, upon one occasion, that he was attacked by so severe a fever, that he was unable to conceal it, and was obliged to retire to bed. His illness seemed likely to be a long one, and the community not being in a condition to provide him with the necessary requisites, they were obliged, after

a few days, to send him to the hospital of the Hôtel Dieu.

Far from being afflicted at this trial, Montfort was filled, on the contrary, with a sensible joy, at seeing himself thus placed among the poor of Jesus Christ; and he could not refrain from showing it to those of his friends who came to visit him. "What an honour," he said to them, "to be in the house of God! It is too great an honour for me; only princes are lodged in the Louvre and in the house of the king." He understood well that this honour was not to the taste of the world, but for a long time the world and its judgments had been nothing to him. Only one thing afflicted him, and that was that instead of being mixed up with the crowd, he was placed in the hall of the priests, where he was surrounded with more than ordinary attentions. The sisters, indeed, had not been slow in distinguishing him from the other sick, and his extraordinary virtue could not fail to arrest their attention. They saw him continually in prayer; if he spoke, it was to bless God, and to testify his perfect submission to His will. It was enough to have heard him once, to wish to see him again, and the unction of his words was so penetrating, that no one ever left him without experiencing an ardent desire of his own sanctification. To listen to him, no one would have supposed him to be ill, so little did he speak of his sufferings. Nevertheless, the danger increased from day to day; remedies were without effect, and his death appeared certain. He alone never despaired of his cure; and when he seemed to have only a few hours to live, he announced his speedy recovery in so positive a manner, that this assurance could only be attributed to supernatural knowledge. However this may be, his convalescence was as rapid as had been the progress of

his illness. He appeared to recover quite suddenly, and he was soon in a condition to get up and walk, and resume his accustomed duties. The letters of Père Surin, which he had at that time an opportunity of reading, made a very lively impression upon his mind, especially the first, in which the holy Jesuit speaks of an admirable young man whom he had met with in a *diligence*, whilst on a journey from Rouen to Paris.

God then made known in a very sensible manner, that His Providence would never abandon one who had resigned himself wholly into His hands. Louis de Montfort was already known in the seminaries of St. Sulpice, in consequence of the intimate relations which had existed between them and the community of M. de la Barmondière. The high esteem with which he had been regarded by this worthy superior; everything which his former companions, who had entered St. Sulpice, had related of him; the respect entertained for him by the new community in which he had since lived; and, lastly, the heroic proofs of virtue which he had shown at the Hôtel Dieu; all these things together caused him to be regarded as a man already far advanced in holiness. M. Bouin, director of one of the houses of St. Sulpice, called the "Little Seminary," on account of its more modest buildings and more moderate pension, was intimately acquainted with de Montfort, M. de la Barmondière having sent him sometimes to ask his advice. This acquaintance had inspired him with the greatest esteem for the holy seminarist. As Madame d'Alègre had proposed to apply to his use a pension of 150 livres, which she was in the habit of paying to the seminary of St. Sulpice, it was accepted with much joy. M. Bouin did even more; in order to complete the full pension of 250 livres, he procured for the young ecclesiastic,

without his having either asked for, or even thought about it, a benefice of the value of a hundred livres, which also served as patrimonial title for his ordination. It was situated at St. Jean-de-Concelles, two leagues from Nantes; and M. des Jonchères, archdeacon of that city, took possession of it for him. Montfort related to his uncle, in a letter of the 11th July, 1695, these new favours of God, and especially the last, the author of which was unknown to him. "I beg of you (he said in conclusion) to thank God for me for the graces He has bestowed upon me, not only in temporal things, which are of little moment, but in those which are eternal. May He not enter into judgment with me, for I do not profit by His graces, I do nothing but offend Him."

Thus, Montfort entered the little seminary of St. Sulpice, and was received by the directors as an angel from heaven, whose example could not fail to spread new fervour among their students, who, on their side, had so high an idea of his virtue, that a *Te Deum* having been publicly recited on the day of his arrival, without any motive having been assigned, they were persuaded that it was to thank God for Montfort's entrance, as a special grace bestowed upon the house.

CHAPTER IV.

MONTFORT'S VIRTUES DURING HIS STAY AT THE SEMINARY OF ST. SULPICE, FROM 1695 TO 1700.

"Two men, above all," says M. Blain, "renewed at that time in the little seminary of St. Sulpice, the virtuous examples of the holiest priests of the primitive Church. The first of these, M. Brenier, born of a noble family, and founder of this community, was the humblest of men; his whole care was to hide himself, and to render himself contemptible. A sinner, a great sinner, and the greatest of sinners in his own eyes, he wished every one else to believe the same. In order to please him, it was necessary either to forget him, or to affront him. His mortification, his obedience, and his humility, were so great, that he might have been taken for one of the inhabitants of the Thebaid. The other, M. Bouin, of whom we have already spoken, was an angel upon earth, and assuredly one of the holiest men of these latter times. In his spirit of penance he was a martyr, in his sweetness a Francis of Sales, and in his continual union with God a Philip Neri. Such were Montfort's superior and director, at his entrance into the seminary. Under such masters he could not fail to make the most rapid progress, bringing, as he did, into their school, in other respects, such excellent dispositions, and even then such mature virtues." "From the very beginning," says one of his fellow students, "he appeared in the midst of those fervent youths like an eagle, who raises himself aloft, and loses himself in the clouds, for

he left far behind him even those who seemed to be the most perfect."

At the head of the virtues which shone forth in Montfort during his stay at St. Sulpice, we must place that one which is the rule of all the others, obedience. He possessed it in a high degree, and practised it constantly the whole time that he spent in the seminary. "Always the first, and the most assiduous in the common exercises," says M. Blain, "he knew nothing of dispensations, and I do not know that he ever made use of one during his life." Subject, in like manner, to his masters, he disposed of nothing, did nothing without their permission, and rendered them an exact account of his interior dispositions, as well as of all his proceedings. This submission extended even to the smallest things. If he met with any friend who desired to converse with him, or who begged of him some service out of the time or place in which the rule permitted it, before complying with his request, he managed adroitly to steal away in order to ask permission of his superiors. Enclosed within the seminary, as in the bosom of God Himself, he disliked exceedingly to leave it, even to perform the commissions which had been given him by his friends at home. "These different commissions," he wrote to his uncle, at Rennes, on the 6th of March, 1699, "cause me much trouble, and make me live again to the world. Would to God, that I might be left in peace, as the dead in their graves, or as the snail in its shell! Whilst in its shell it is hidden, and appears to be somewhat; but out of it, it is only dirt and filthiness; this is what I am, and even worse, for I only spoil whatever is given me to do. I beg you, then, in the name of God, to remember me only to pray to God for me."

Montfort well understood that study was both

one of the first duties of his present state, and the means to acquire the learning which his sacred ministry at God's altar would afterwards demand. Thus he gave himself up to it with great ardour and perfect docility. Whether his director had so decided, or he himself had asked permission from a desire of greater solitude and more profound obscurity, he ceased to go to the Sorbonne, and contented himself with the lectures which a doctor of theology gave in the house. But this change did not make him in any degree lessen his labours, and he proved upon every occasion that his great piety was no obstacle to his progress in learning. It happened one day when, according to the custom of the seminary, he had to defend a thesis upon grace, that several of his fellow-students, some to try him, others to humble him, resolved to place him in a difficulty, by proposing to him the strongest objections they could find in a subject already difficult enough in itself. These efforts only served the better to show forth the solidity of his judgment, the penetration of his mind, and the extent of his knowledge. He solved all the difficulties with so much clearness, he explained so satisfactorily the passage which had been objected to him, and he was able, in his turn, to quote so many others in his favour, that his astonished adversaries were obliged to confess that the Holy Spirit is the best of all masters, and that there is nothing useful which may not be learnt in His school.

The chief lessons to be learnt in this divine school are, a knowledge of prayer, a taste for holy things, hatred of self, and zeal for the glory of God. These also were the things sought after by our virtuous seminarist. All the time which he could spare from his theological studies, and

which he was not obliged to give to his neighbour, or for the sake of recruiting his bodily strength, was passed in conversing with God in prayer, and almost always on his knees, either in the church or in his room. Even out of the time of prayer, whether at table or at recreation, the divine love which overflowed his heart caused him sometimes, in spite of himself, to burst into tears or sighs. "He appeared," said one of his fellow-students, "so equable and recollected in all his actions, that I am persuaded that he never lost sight of God. I went, one Sunday, at ten o'clock in the morning, to ask him for some papers which I wanted: he must, I think, have been in prayer, for when I knocked at the door of his room, and he came to open it, his face appeared to me to be luminous, and shining with a more than natural light. I was often with him at recreation-time; his greatest pleasure during that time was to speak of God and of the Blessed Virgin, and he spoke in so edifying a way that it was impossible to leave him without feeling animated with zeal and fervour. He was gay without being distracted, and it was easy to see by his manner and conduct, that he was far more occupied with God than with all the amusements in which he was engaged. He had, however, none of that false spirituality, which, under the pretext of a more enlightened and detached perfection, affects to have no recourse to sensible objects, of which he made use continually, because he knew by experience how suitable they are to recall the mind and heart to God, and how many graces our Lord attaches to their use. From his childhood he had always had a singular devotion to the holy rosary; the lights with which God had favoured him did but strengthen this practice; and, as a mark of devotion to Mary, he generally wore his

rosary attached to his girdle. He was still more careful never to lose sight of the image of Jesus Crucified, and when he was studying, he was always in the habit of placing it before him, together with that of His holy Mother."

The love which inwardly consumed him animated him with an insatiable desire of procuring the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He never let an occasion escape. One day he happened to meet in a narrow street two young men who were fighting a duel. At the sight of so criminal an action, and of the danger incurred by souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, transported as it were out of himself, he boldly advanced towards the combatants, and spoke to them so forcibly and prudently, that he succeeded in putting a stop to the duel, and in reconciling them to one another. One of them was so struck by this heroic action, that from that moment he thought of quitting the world, and shortly afterwards he did in fact enter the Seminary of St. Sulpice, where more than once he was heard to relate this circumstance with admiration. If Montfort chanced to meet with hawkers who were selling bad books or obscene songs, he bought them and tore them to pieces in their presence, accompanying this action with a sweet but sharp reprimand. In vain was it represented to him that he did but put off the evil for a moment, he thought himself happy to be able to prevent or even retard a single sin.

His zeal was not less active in the seminary itself. At recreation-time he loved only to speak of pious matters; his ideas were then sublime, and his conversation fluent; his mouth spoke out of the abundance of his heart. Ordinary language not sufficing, as it would appear, for the expression of his thoughts, he had recourse to singing

and poetry; he composed hymns, and sang them in all simplicity to his fellow students, without troubling himself about their criticism. Piety alone had inspired them, and it was piety alone which animated his gesture and voice, while he sang them during the time of recreation. Besides all this, he would every day find out some new invention, in order to awaken by his own fervour that of the other seminarists, subject, of course, always to the good pleasure of his superiors. Sometimes it would be the expression *Deo gratias*, which, after the example of St. Felix of Cantalicio, he would try to propagate among his companions, repeating it himself, and causing others to repeat it, whenever they met. At other times he renewed the practice, already recommended at St. Sulpice, of directing each personal salutation to the guardian angel of the person saluted. Or again, while showing or giving away pious pictures, he took occasion to make known his thoughts upon the subjects which they represented. But it was devotion to Mary, this devotion of his childhood and his whole life, that he was, more than all, desirous of communicating to all around him. Having read M. Boudon's work on the Slavery of the Blessed Virgin, he obtained leave from M. Tronson, then Superior General of the Seminaries of St. Sulpice, to spread this practice in the house; only, in order to prevent any false or blameable meaning being attributed to this devotion, this great man, the glory and oracle of the clergy of his day, substituted in the certificates of association, the words, "Slaves of Jesus in Mary," for the expression "Slaves of Mary."*

* His own account of the matter is as follows:—"Have the goodness to observe that I generally say 'the slave of Jesus in Mary, the slavery of Mary in Jesus.' I might in good truth, as many have done before, say, 'the slave of Mary,' 'the slavery of the holy

Montfort succeeded, in like manner, with the permission of his superiors, in engaging those who, like himself, were not yet in holy orders, to recite on walking days the Psalter of St. Bonaventure, in which the words of the Psalms are so devoutly applied to the Mother of God. He had the art of mingling piety even in their games. Thus he invented a game of spillikins, in which each splinter bore, together with the name of some virtue, a greater or less value; charity, for example, was worth fifty points, humility thirty, and so on; he who drew out the greatest number without moving the rest, won the game.

The austerities of the fervent seminarist, during his stay at St. Sulpice, were moderated by obedience, and this moderation itself was doubtless not the least of his penances. But those which he was authorised to practice, although so light to one who was carried away by a holy hatred against himself, must have appeared extreme in the sight of others. Indeed, it may be remarked in general, that he knew how to make use of everything for the mortification of his body; he never gave it any peace. The smallest, most inconvenient, and gloomiest room was always that of his choice.

Virgin;' but I think it is better to say, 'the slave of Jesus in Mary,' as M. Tronson, Superior General of the Seminary in St. Sulpice, renowned for his rare prudence and consummate piety, counselled to an ecclesiastic who consulted him on the subject."—*Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, p. 170.

He then gives M. Tronson's reasons, which may be thus summed up:

1. Because, although we have a perfect right to make use of the expression, it is better not to give needless occasion of criticism.

2. Because the principal mystery we celebrate in honour of this devotion is the mystery of the Incarnation, where we can only see Jesus in Mary.

3. Because this manner of speaking sets forth still more the intimate union which there is between Jesus and Mary. "Jesus is altogether in Mary, and Mary is altogether in Jesus, so that we might call our Lord *Jesus of Mary*, and our Blessed Lady *Mary of Jesus*."—Tr.

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Almost the whole of the time he spent in the seminary he lived immediately under the roof, where he had to suffer the heat of summer and the cold of winter. In the greatest cold he never allowed himself a fire, although he had to pass without any exercise almost entire days in his room. This mortification must have been felt by him all the more severely in consequence of his thin clothing and slight covering for the feet, for without letting it be seen, he was in the habit of wearing stockings without feet to them, a practice which he observed all his life.

In Montfort the inner man was still more mortified than the outer. He never allowed himself anything which he could possibly refuse. It was enough for him to feel an inclination to anything, at once to interdict its use, at least until he had moderated the eagerness of his desire. Thus, for instance, on receiving a letter, instead of opening it at once, he would put off reading it for a day, sometimes even for a whole week. If he felt too much joy in seeing a friend, he very soon shrank quietly away, in order to deprive himself of this satisfaction.

Such were some of the virtues which shone forth in Montfort during his stay at Saint-Sulpice. All the rest of his conduct was quickened by the same spirit. Poor himself, he knew how to find in the riches of others a thousand means of relieving the poor, who were always the object of his affection; his confidence in God's Providence was without bounds, and more than once he was miraculously rewarded for it. The love of crosses and humiliations was in him a true passion, which God did but increase, by deigning from time to time to satisfy it.

CHAPTER V.

TRIALS TO WHICH MONTFORT WAS EXPOSED DURING HIS STAY AT ST. SULPICE, FROM 1695 TO 1700.

It was at St. Sulpice that God, in His Providence wished to perfect Montfort's preparation for the apostolate, by rendering all his thoughts more and more supernatural, by detaching him not only from the vanity of the world, but even from the most estimable persons. This tree, which until now, had shot up its young branches with a vigour which nothing could stop, had need, in order before long to produce abundant fruit, to be pruned and bent in an opposite direction. The good Householder was not slow in providing what was needful. It is necessary to make this observation, in order to understand why God once again permitted a saint to find in other saints his most painful contradictions; and why He allowed Montfort to suffer so much in this model house, both on the part of the seminarists, and even of the superiors, who treated him, apparently, with excessive rigour. It might be thought, that a man who had no other rule of conduct but the most absolute obedience, no other ambition but to love God, and to cause Him to be loved, would have received nothing but proofs of love and of esteem. But God would not thus have attained His end, and the Church would not have had in Montfort one of those men, whose life, detached from all material things, and altogether filled with God alone, is, as it were, a solemn protest against the flesh and the world.

What was there, then, in Montfort's conduct to furnish a pretext for such rigorous treatment?

His behaviour, it is true, differed in many points from the ordinary behaviour of men. It has been said, and, perhaps, with reason, that his character was naturally, in some respects, singular, and that God, in order to preserve, as it were, under the ashes, the divine fire laid up in his heart, permitted, during his whole life, certain singularities, of a nature to humble him, to be remarked in him. And, indeed, all the saints have more or less incurred this reproach; and, unfortunately, it is true, that sanctity is too rare, and too opposed to the common conduct of men, not to appear extraordinary. Besides, many things have been blamed in the saints, which would not have been found fault with, nor even noticed, in other men. There are several things which go to show that it was thus with many of the reproaches made against Montfort. Certain it is, that his singularities were not the effect either of vanity or of obstinacy; for his whole life proves that he never desired to be noticed by creatures, and that it was always his desire to let himself be guided by others. Nor can his behaviour be attributed to ignorance or a false spirit; his writings, which remain to us, the rules which he made for himself, the undertakings which he directed with so much success, show in him rare exactness of doctrine, as well as great justness of judgment.

But, without denying that his natural character may have had something to do with his extraordinary way of speaking and acting, why should we not rather look for the cause in that grace, more extraordinary than all the rest, which had prevented his earliest years? Trained, so to speak, and living habitually in the interior kingdom of Jesus Christ, which has no other light but faith, no other hope but that of the good things to come, no other law but that of the charity of God, was it

surprising, that obliged to live, notwithstanding, in the midst of our sensual and lower world, he should have had the embarrassed look, and spoken the extraordinary language of a stranger? His conduct could not fail to reflect his profound conviction that there is nothing great but God, nothing precious but His grace; and that the world, anathematised by Jesus Christ, does not deserve that any account should be taken either of its contempt or of its praises.

Thus, if on entering the Sorbonne, he placed himself on his knees, alone, in a corner of the class, to implore the light of the Sovereign Truth; if, in the streets he walked bare-headed out of respect for the presence of God; if he often held his crucifix in his hand and lovingly kissed it; if he made profession of his devotion to the Queen of Heaven, by wearing his rosary in his girdle; if he loved to speak of God and of the things of God, to such an extent as not to be able to speak of other things; if, in a word, his love for our Lord was manifested by sighs and tears, by joyful songs, or outbursts of simplicity, all this was but the natural expression of a soul that never calculated what might be thought about its conduct, but acted without ostentation or without fear, under the influence of the sweet and living light which inundated it and carried it joyously along. As for the rest, if there was anything ridiculous about him, it was that of acting and speaking every day, as, perhaps, each one of us would wish to have acted and spoken when he comes to die. Alas! let us confess that the saints have passed their lives in light, whilst we have need of the torch of death before we can see, as they have seen.

Nevertheless, it is easy to conceive how liable to illusion was the way which Montfort followed, and what need there was of humility. Directors, so

prudent as those of St. Sulpice, could not, therefore, fail to take the necessary measures to assure themselves of the nature of the spirit by which he was guided. Even on the supposition that he was led by the Holy Ghost, it was still their duty to humble and mortify his nature, in proportion to the sublimity of his vocation. At first, M. Bouin required him to lessen the penances which were so sweet to him, and he was obeyed; then, upon the complaints made to him of Montfort's excessive self-recollection, and of his too continual conversations upon religious subjects, he persuaded him to condescend a little more to the weakness of his fellow-students; but this advice was not so easily followed, in consequence of the interior attractions which almost invincibly carried away all his thoughts. Besides, advice of this nature would lose its force in the mouth of M. Bouin, that seraphic man, who, himself all filled with God, spoke of Him without ceasing, and remained, as it were, unconscious and voiceless, whenever, upon reflection, he tried to speak upon any other subject. He had been even heard to say, that there is no more effectual way of being filled with God, than by plainly and sweetly speaking of Him at the time of recreation, and that one may often go away more inflamed with divine love from recreation than from prayer itself. Montfort, then, must have been more tempted to follow his example than his counsel, had not obedience been in his eyes the rule of virtue; he tried, therefore, to keep down in his soul the holy thoughts which presented themselves; but all his efforts were useless to find other thoughts to put into words; he remained silent, and, as it were, stupified. In his love of obedience, he had imagined that he could make a collection of laughable tales and stories, and he tried to tell them as well as he

could, at recreation-time; but he had not, any more than M. Bouin, the grace to succeed. If there was anything laughable at all, it was to see him relating funny things in so devotional a way.

Up to that time Montfort's trials had not been great, for the humiliations and opposition shown to him had as yet arisen only on the part of certain seminarists, who, to tell the truth, did not spare him; but M. Bouin died, and M. Leschassier succeeded him in the direction of this soul, which God was conducting step by step to Calvary, in order to make him die there, and by his death to procure the resurrection of many. M. Bouin had but feebly opposed Montfort's inclinations, and, full of esteem for him, had been unable not to show something of it in his dealings with him, and so perhaps had fostered in his soul what still remained of self-love and natural attachment. M. Leschassier's direction was much more severe. He bridled even the most pious desires of his penitent, and thought it right to oppose him in everything. Some marks of confidence and affection are often necessary for the comfort of humbled nature, but Montfort never received any from his director. Punctual in presenting himself two or three times every month, according to the practice of the seminary, to give an account of his interior, he brought with him the confidence of a child, and a soul all on fire; what then must have been his mortification to meet with nothing but indifference and coldness, to find himself scarcely listened to, always found fault with, and often sent away as many as ten times, one after another, with a look of weariness and disdain! Could there be anything better calculated to detach a soul from every creature, or to cause it to find in God alone its whole support?

These private mortifications were not as yet

enough. God wished to harden Montfort in preparation for the public humiliations which were reserved for the whole of his career. M. Brennier, the superior of the seminary in which he resided, was charged by M. Leschassier to humble him in every kind of way. This superior, greedy of humiliations for himself, had an admirable manner of following up self-love even into its last retrenchments, and of obliging it to show itself or to perish; and when he wished, he knew by a word or a look to throw the boldest out of countenance and make them tremble. In order to be well humbled, Montfort could not fall into better hands, and he was fully humbled. The countenance of his superior had for him only an air of severity, his lips but dry words, his eyes but disdainful looks. He spied out in his seminarist every wile of nature, and if he discovered the least trace he attacked it to the very root. For this purpose he chose especially the moment of recreation, in order that the presence of his fellow students might add to his humiliation, and that they themselves might be, as it were, authorised to carry on more and more actively the war which they daily waged against him. No one else could have borne even once, the blows of this murderer of nature, this destroyer of self-love; yet Montfort bore with them, not only for days, but for six whole months, without showing the least trouble, or losing any of his sweetness; going up, when the humiliation was over, to the very person who had been its author, with as much simplicity and joy as if nothing had happened. At last M. Brennier was obliged to give up his charge, and to confess to M. Leschassier that he had exhausted every means, and knew no longer any way of humiliating Montfort. M. Leschassier did not on this account at all relax

the rigour of his dealings in regard to him, the whole time he remained in the seminary, and even long after he had left.

Must we then conclude that there was any doubt at Saint-Sulpice about the sanctity of Montfort? Perhaps indeed they feared to pronounce upon such extraordinary virtue, or to propose it for a model in a house where they were bound to banish everything that was singular. It cannot, however, be doubted that from that time they began to recognise in him the foundations of virtue which had so real an existence, and a confidential letter of M. Leschassier which we shall soon have occasion to produce, shows us the judgment which he had himself formed of the servant of God. The very way in which he treated him would of itself prove the high idea which he had formed of his holiness, for only heroic virtue could have borne such a trial; nor, whilst he thus continually mortified him, did he omit to show him several marks of confidence which were sufficiently significative.

Besides being employed as librarian, he was also entrusted with the care of the beautiful chapel of the Blessed Virgin, behind the choir, in the parish church of St. Sulpice. It would be difficult to tell with what joy and exactness our pious seminarist discharged the duties of this post, which he retained during the remainder of his stay at the seminary. He had also been appointed master of the ceremonies, and during the short time that he filled this post, he succeeded in doing, what many others before him had attempted in vain. This was to draw up a summary of everything connected with the sacred offices, so that each person officiating might be able at once to discover what he had to do. Another of his employments could hardly have been more to his taste, that of

catechist. In this lay his special attraction, for his whole heart was in the work. The wildest children of the Faubourg St. Germain had been given him to catechise. But, however badly disposed they might be, he knew so well how to touch them, that the most unteachable were moved to tears, and showed every sign of true conversion. The rumour of his success having reached the seminary, some young men, who could not believe what they had heard, wished to find out for themselves the truth of the matter. They were one day present at his catechism. They had come with the express purpose of noticing whatever might seem ridiculous, but the earnest and touching manner in which he spoke in their presence of the great truths of religion, made so strong an impression upon them, that they were forced to recognise in him at least the gift of being able to touch the heart.

It was at that time a pious custom of the seminary of St. Sulpice, to depute every year two seminarists, (and doubtless the most fervent were chosen), to make, in the name of the community, a pilgrimage to our Lady of Chartres. Montfort was one of those who were sent upon this touching mission. Every step of his journey was marked by new proofs of his zeal. Whilst traversing the vast plain of La Beauce, if he happened to see any labourers at a distance, he would leave his companion, without even thinking of the fatigue, in order to go and catechise them, and speak to them a few words of edification. On his arrival at Chartres, he went straight to the church, which was the object of his pilgrimage. The next day, he returned to it very early in the morning, communicated, and, as he never for a moment felt any weariness at the feet of her, whom he had always looked upon as his tender Mother, he stopped in

the church six whole hours upon his knees, motionless, in profound prayer. Nor did he leave off his prayer until he was told that it was time for him to take his repast, and even then he did so unwillingly. His fervour soon led him back into the church, where he remained until evening, so that his companion, although very pious, was astonished to see him conversing so long a time in prayer with God. His return to St. Sulpice resembled his journey from it; nor, doubtless, did he return without new graces, and a new desire for his sanctification.

BOOK II.

FROM MONTFORT'S PROMOTION TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN 1700, TO HIS APOSTOLIC MISSION IN 1706.

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE PROMOTION OF MONTFORT TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN 1700, TO HIS APPOINTMENT, AS CHAPLAIN, TO THE HOSPITAL GENERAL OF POITIERS IN 1701.

The whole life of Montfort had been a preparation for the priesthood; and who ever was more worthy of it, if, indeed, any one could be worthy, than a man endowed with so many graces, and so holy from his childhood? Who ever was better fitted for so high a dignity, than one who had been formed by the most skilful masters, and thoroughly trained by them in every virtue? If the union of innocence and penance, zeal and humility, could give any rights to the august ministry of the altar, who had better right than he to aspire to it? Long before he entered into sacred orders, his directors had permitted him to consecrate himself to God by a vow of chastity. He had chosen for this purpose the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, in the church of St. Sulpice, where he went with several of the seminarists every Saturday to communion. There, at the feet of his *good Mother*, and through her virginal hands, he had offered to God, the sacrifice of a body, preserved from those

sad stains by which youth is so often blemished. "For," says M. Blain, who had known him from his earliest years, and who had followed him to the grave, "I am persuaded that he died a virgin, and that his flesh went down into the tomb as pure and innocent as it had come forth from the cradle."

Years passed on, Montfort was now twenty-seven years old, seven of which had been consecrated to the study of theology. Filled, like all the saints, with a holy dread at the thought of the priesthood, he was slowly climbing the holy mountain, his only desire being to delay the moment of reaching its summit, when he was suddenly urged to mount up higher. To this proposal he made many difficulties and shed many tears, and it was found necessary to give him a formal order. Then only did he bend his shoulders beneath a burden, which the angels themselves might tremble to receive. We are ignorant of the particular nature of his immediate preparation for the priesthood, but we can easily form some idea of it from the whole of his past life. He must at that time have been favoured with many clear lights, and admirably disposed, since M. Leschassier, from whom nothing was hidden in his soul, desired him to commit to writing his thoughts upon the priesthood. It is to be regretted that this writing has not been preserved.

He was ordained priest on the 5th of June, 1700, on the Ember Saturday after Pentecost, by Mgr. de Flamanville, bishop of Perpignan, to whom the Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, had entrusted the ordinations of his diocese. It must have been a great consolation for the holy deacon to receive the imposition of hands from this prelate. Mgr. de Flamanville was that friend of young Claude le Pelletier de Souzi, of whom

mention is so often made in the life of that holy student; and it is to him that we owe the greater part of the details of that interesting history. After having been himself the glory and edification of the seminary of St. Sulpice, it had been his desire to carry the faith to distant nations; but, although his zeal was confined to France, he did not remain idle. While as yet a simple priest, he gave every Lent, with remarkable success, a course of catechism and instruction to about a thousand lackeys in the church of St. Sulpice. Montfort having had the honour to assist him for several years in these evangelical functions, had conceived for him those feelings of esteem and veneration, which are so often united in the elect with the tenderest affection. It was this same prelate, who, when afterwards bishop of Perpignan, became acquainted with the poor country garden-woman, who was in the habit of expressing to God the affections of her heart by the prayer so well known under the name of the "garden-woman's Our Father." (Pater de la Jardinière).

Montfort spent his ordination day with lively feelings of reverence, wonder, and gratitude to God. Instead of saying, according to his custom, but one *Deo Gratias* on meeting his friends, on that day he said to them, "A thousand times *Deo Gratias*." He obtained leave from his director to remain until the evening in thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament, and he took several days to prepare himself for his first mass.

The place which he chose for its celebration was the same chapel of the Blessed Virgin behind the choir in the parish church of St. Sulpice, of which he had taken so much care since his entrance into the seminary. "I assisted him," says M. Blain; "he seemed to me like an angel at the altar; nor was I the only one struck by his angelic

appearance. One of his brother seminarists, who was also present, noticed the same thing, and spoke to me about it; upon which, having remarked, in order to ascertain his real feelings, that several seminarists, whose names I mentioned to him, and who were very fervent, had also appeared very devout while celebrating their first mass, he replied: '*That is true, but, nevertheless, what a difference, M. de Montfort seemed like an angel.*' His testimony deserves attention, for he was not of a humour to flatter any one, still less M. de Montfort, to whom he was not very favourable."

The only thought of the new priest was to devote himself to the salvation of souls; his well-regulated zeal had commenced with himself, and had, up to this time, animated him with an ardent desire for his own perfection, which has few examples. Henceforward, inflamed with that heavenly fire which our divine Saviour came upon earth to kindle, his only desire was to inflame the whole world. He passed the remainder of the time which he spent in the seminary, in preparing sufficient matter for sermons, to enable him to speak with ease at all times, and on every kind of subject, as indeed he afterwards did. Owing to the ardour of his charity, heathen countries had a special attraction for him. "What are we doing, my dear friends," he would say sometimes to his fellow students, "why are we useless labourers, while so many souls are perishing in Japan and the Indies, for want of preachers and catechists to instruct them in the truths of salvation?" He learnt one day, that several ecclesiastics were to leave on the next morning for Canada, where the Congregation of St. Sulpice had, under its direction, the seminary of Montreal, and in a transport of zeal he offered himself as their companion. But

M. Leschassier refused his services, for fear (as he afterwards told M. Blain) that allowing himself to be carried away by the impetuosity of his zeal, he might be lost in the vast forests of that country, whilst labouring for the conversion of the savages. Not that there was not a great desire to see Montfort attached to the Congregation, as M. Leschassier also informed M. Blain; but his interior attraction towards the missions was too strong to be resisted, or to leave doubt that such was the Divine Will. His directors not having judged it well to send him to the New World, were obliged, although with regret, to renounce the idea of retaining him in their midst; they therefore persuaded him to follow up his vocation, and he now only waited for the means of doing so. God was not slow to furnish them. Three months had scarcely elapsed since his ordination, when the good Householder bade him go and work in His vineyard.

Meanwhile, there arrived at Paris a holy priest from Nantes, named M. Lévêque, who for a long time had devoted himself with great zeal to the missions, and to all kinds of good works. He had associated with himself several ecclesiastics, of whom he had formed the community of St. Clément. His life was poor and penitential beyond expression. A crown sufficed him for his journey from Nantes to Paris; his food was only bread and water. Brought up by M. Olier in the celebrated school of perfection which was first established at Aorone, and afterwards at Issy, near Paris, he went from time to time to St. Sulpice to waken up his fervour, as he said, among those to whom he thought himself indebted for the little which he had. The more he advanced in years, the more frequent were his visits, and the longer he remained; for it was his earnest desire

to die there, and God granted it. On this occasion it appeared that Providence had led him there, in order to open up to Montfort his future path in life. As soon as he became acquainted with Montfort he desired to attach him to himself, and the latter, by the advice of his director, anticipated his wishes. The young priest was glad to make his apprenticeship to the apostolic life under such a master, and the holy old man on his side congratulated himself on having gained so worthy a fellow-labourer. It would, indeed, have been difficult to find two men who agreed better together for the kind of life which they had chosen, and the spirit of penance which they had embraced.

M. Lévêque and Montfort set out together from Paris, in the month of September, and having reached Orleans, embarked upon the Loire. Amongst the passengers were three libertines, from whose lips fell nothing but foul words and horrible blasphemies. The new missionary reproved them without giving way to human respect, and seeing them turn his words into ridicule he announced to them in a firm voice, that they would soon meet with their punishment. The event was not slow in confirming this prediction. One of them died a few days after of an excess of drunkenness; the others, having quarrelled, fought a duel, and were both severely wounded. Upon their arrival at Nantes after a journey of a few days, M. Lévêque and Montfort began their labours without delay in the country parts of the diocese, and continued them up to the month of February in the following year. We have no details of these missions; we only know that it was not long before Montfort discovered that it would be impossible for him to remain longer in this community. Those who composed it did not, for the

most part, resemble their venerable superior. Almost all were imbued with Jansenist errors, and were filled with the proud and crafty spirit which distinguished that sect. The young missionary could not sympathise with men who failed in respect to the Chair of St. Peter. He regretted to part from M. Lévêque, and M. Lévêque, on his side, regretted his departure, but the state into which the community soon afterwards fell, proved that he was right in leaving it. Later on we shall see the rancour with which he was regarded by those whom he had abandoned, and how dearly, in consequence of their intrigues and the influence which they exercised over a prelate who favoured their errors, the servant of God had to pay for his attachment to the Church.

He was still at Nantes, when he learnt that his sister Louise, who had been placed as a boarder in the community of S. Joseph, at Paris, had suddenly been deprived of the assistance of those who had hitherto befriended her, and was on the point of being sent away. While waiting for some means of helping her, he wrote her the following letter to encourage her to abandon herself, without reserve and without fear, into the hands of God's Providence.

"My dear sister in Jesus Christ,

"May the pure love of God reign in our hearts! Although in body far away from you, in heart I am near; for your heart is not far away from Jesus Christ and His holy Mother, and you are the daughter of God's Providence, of which I also, although unworthy, am the child. Indeed, you ought rather to be called the novice of Divine Providence, because you are only beginning to practise the confidence and perfect abandonment which God requires of you. You will only be

professed and received as a daughter of Providence when your abandonment shall be complete and perfect, and your sacrifice entire. God wishes you, my dear sister, God wishes you to be separated from everything which is not Himself, and perhaps to be really abandoned by all creatures; but be consoled and rejoice, servant and spouse of Jesus Christ, if you resemble your Master and your Spouse. Jesus is poor, Jesus is abandoned, Jesus is despised and rejected as the offscouring of the world: happy, a thousand times happy is Louise Grignon, if she too is poor of spirit, if she too is abandoned, despised, rejected as the very sweepings of the house of S. Joseph! Then will she be truly the servant and spouse of Jesus Christ; then will she be a truly professed daughter of Divine Providence, if not of religion. God wishes you, my dear sister, to live from day to day as the bird upon the branch, without thinking of the morrow. Sleep then and rest upon the bosom of Divine Providence and of the Holy Virgin, seeking only to love and please God; for it is an infallible truth, an eternal and divine axiom, as true as that there is a God, (would to God that I could write it on your mind and in your heart in characters that could never be blotted out:) *Seek first the kingdom of God and its justice, and all the rest shall be added unto you.* If you do the first, God, Who is infinitely faithful, will do the second; that is to say, if you serve God faithfully and His Holy Mother, you will want for nothing, either in this world or in the next. You will not even want a brother and a priest, who has been, and is, and will be, all in all to you in his sacrifices, in order that you, in your sacrifices, may be all in all to Jesus Christ. I salute your good Guardian Angel.

"Nantes, February, 1701."

His desire to go and assist this sister had no doubt something to do with the project which he formed of returning to Paris; but he was chiefly moved to take this step from a desire of consulting his old directors. It was by their advice he had come to Nantes; not being able to stay there any longer, and fearing, besides, to be guided by his own lights, he was anxious to replace himself in their hands, in order to receive fresh direction. At the distance of about a league from his line of route lay the Abbey of Fontevrault, where he desired to see another of his sisters, who had only recently made her profession. Upon his arrival he merely asked for "charity for the love of God." The touching manner in which he pronounced these words, and the air of piety which spread over his whole exterior, excited the curiosity of the portress; she asked him several questions, to which he only answered, "Charity for the love of God." The abbess, informed of this, came herself to the door, and asked the stranger his name and quality. "Madame," he answered, "why do you ask my name? It is not for myself, it is for the love of God I ask your charity." Did he desire by this answer to give her a lesson on the supernatural motive which ought to lead us to relieve our neighbour, or was it that, perceiving that she was prepossessed in his favour, he wished to avoid an honourable reception, which would have annoyed him more than anything? Be this as it may, his answer seemed somewhat disrespectful, and the pilgrim was sent away without relief. Although exhausted by fatigue, and renouncing with difficulty the pious desire which he must have had of speaking for an instant with his sister, he retired without uttering a complaint, and contented himself with saying to the portress: "If the lady abbess had known me, she

would not, doubtless, have refused me the charity I asked." And indeed, his sister having at once recognised him by the description given of him, ran after him and pressed him to return; but her entreaties were useless, and he went to the house of some poor country people to seek for the food and repose which he so greatly needed.

CHAPTER II.

FROM HIS APPOINTMENT AS CHAPLAIN TO THE HOSPITAL-GENERAL OF POITIERS, IN 1701, TO HIS JOURNEY TO PARIS IN 1702.

Instead of continuing on the direct road to Paris, Montfort quitted it in order to pass through Poitiers, where he had a commission to execute for his own and his sister's protectress, Madame de Montespan. The result proved that God also in His Providence, had His designs in thus guiding him to this city. Having gone to say Mass at the hospital, the air of piety with which he always performed this august duty, and the profound recollection with which he passed a whole hour in thanksgiving, made a deep impression upon all the poor who had been present at his Mass. At that moment they happened to be without a chaplain. "Here is a saint," they said one to the other, "here is the man for us; let us detain him, and try to get him to settle in our midst." It seemed to be a general inspiration; it was at once put into execution. They surrounded the man of God, as he was about to leave; they called him their father, and entreated

him to become so actually. He represented to them that he was a stranger in the diocese, and was only passing through their city; but they continued to press him with words and tears capable of softening the hardest heart. So much entreaty was hardly necessary to touch the heart of one whose inclination and tenderness had always drawn him towards the poor. "My dear friends," he said to them, "ask if it be the will of God." One of them undertook to write, in the name of all the poor, to Mgr. de Girard, Bishop of Poitiers, who was then absent from that city, and Montfort, on his part, consented to await the reply.

Meanwhile, he gave himself up, with the permission of the Vicars General, to all kinds of good works. Almost daily he assembled together under the market sheds the children and the poor of the city, to teach them the catechism. The touching exhortations which he added to these instructions attracted many other persons, and made a lively impression upon the hearts of all. From time to time he visited the poor of the hospital, and the respect with which he treated them proved clearly that in them he saw Jesus Christ Himself. The students, who were very numerous in this city, had also a share in his ministry. After having gained their affection by his zeal and sweetness, he formed the most docile amongst them into a little society, to which he gave rules. They were to spend a small portion of time every day in prayer, and to read a few pages of some good book; to unite together for innocent amusement upon holidays; to frequent the sacrament; to enrol their names in the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin, established in the College of the Jesuits; and, above all, to use all their efforts to withdraw from a disorderly life

those of their companions who had been led astray. But, indeed, it was enough if they succeeded in bringing them to Montfort, for however scandalous and hardened the student might be, one or two conversations were sufficient entirely to change him. This little society afterwards produced a great number of excellent priests and edifying laymen.

On his return to Poitiers, at the end of about a month, the bishop took notice of the request which had been made to him. Before coming to a decision he thought it well to take the advice of the Superior-General of Saint-Sulpice; he therefore consulted him as to whether he considered Montfort a fit person to take the management of a large hospital, and to give instructions in it.* We will here give a few passages from M. Leschassier's reply, dated 13 May, 1701. "God has endowed him with many graces, with which he has faithfully corresponded, for he has seemed to me and to others who have closely watched his conduct, to have been constant in the love and practice of prayer, mortification, poverty, and obedience. He is very zealous in assisting and instructing the poor. He has skill enough to bring things to a happy issue; but as his exterior is somewhat singular, and his behaviour not to the taste of many persons, and as, although endowed with a high idea of perfection and much zeal, he has had very little experience, (he has only been priest eleven months,) I do not know whether he is suited for the hospital, for which he has been asked." After this reply, and still more after all the good which he had seen done by him in his episcopal city and hospital, Mgr. de Poitiers wrote thus on the 25th

* The "Hôpital General" usually includes a "hospice" for the poor, as well as the Hôtel Dieu, or hospital for the sick.—(Trans.)

of August to Montfort: "Our poor continue to desire you. I think it therefore right to tell you that their desires, in addition to what M. Leschassier has taken the trouble to write to me about you, make me believe that God wishes you to be near them, if Monseigneur your Bishop be kind enough to give his permission. I beg of you then to ask it of him, and, if granted, to avail yourself of it as soon as possible." Whilst waiting for this permission, and for the fulfilment of certain necessary formalities attendant upon his admission into the hospital, into which he could not be received before the Feast of All Saints, he was lodged by the bishop in his "Little Seminary."

Without abandoning the care of those who were outside the hospital, without ceasing to preach, to hear confessions, and to give retreats in the city and its environs, Montfort devoted himself without intermission to the employment with which he had been entrusted. Once within the hospital, this establishment became, as was fitting, the chief object of his zeal. Up to this time it had been, in every respect, in a state of great disorder, which to many persons seemed absolutely desperate. But by his skill and devotedness, the new chaplain succeeded in correcting many abuses. For the better success of his spiritual reform, he began by looking for a remedy for the material evils. As the revenues of the hospital were insufficient, he was often seen, accompanied by a few poor persons, going through the city with an ass, laden with panniers, in order to solicit alms. The privations which he spared others he imposed with delight upon himself. Not only did he receive no part of the salary attached to his office, but he chose for his own the most wretched room in the house; he took no

other food but that of the poor, and in so small a quantity that it was impossible to understand how he could live upon so little. Whatever he received in the way of presents to himself he employed in the decoration of the chapel, as furniture for the hospital, or in the relief of his dear poor. Besides his spiritual duties, which he discharged with untiring zeal, he performed the meanest offices in the service of the sick. It was a recreation to him to wait upon them at table, to sweep the rooms and the courts, to wash the basins, to prepare the beds, and to perform many other duties even more distasteful. It happened once that a poor man who had fallen ill of a contagious disease, and was covered all over with sores, had been refused admittance into the hospital for fear of contagion. After much entreaty Montfort obtained leave to receive him, and placed him, by way of precaution, in a room by himself, in a retired part of the house. He himself undertook the whole charge of this sick man, nor would he allow anyone else to share his charitable labours. He dressed his sores, and one day when, from weakness of nature, he felt more than usual repugnance in waiting upon one whose very sight inspired horror, he reproached himself for an excess of delicacy, and in order thoroughly to overcome his repugnance, did what we read many of the saints have done; he collected the matter of the sores in the hollow of his hand, and swallowed it. He afterwards related this action to Sister Mary of Jesus, in order to encourage her to overcome herself, and he added that, by a sensible effect of grace, he had never tasted anything so delicious.

One would have thought that such holy conduct and so many services rendered to the hospital, would have gained for the man of God the esteem

and gratitude of all hearts; but our Lord rewards in another way those whom He loves, as Montfort soon discovered. We cannot better describe the state in which he found the hospital, the good which he did there, and all that he suffered, than by quoting a letter which he wrote on the 4th of July, 1702, to M. Leschassier, and in which he gave a "brief and true" account of his management.

"I entered this poor hospital, or rather this poor Babylon, with a firm resolution of bearing, with Jesus Christ my Master, the crosses which I well foresaw would certainly befall me, if the work were from God. All that I was told by several experienced ecclesiastics of the city, who endeavoured to dissuade me from entering this house of disorder, which appeared to them incapable of improvement, only increased my desire of undertaking the work, notwithstanding my own inclination, which has always led me, and still leads me, to the missions.

"The superiors and subordinates of the hospital, and indeed the whole city, were delighted at my arrival, as they regarded me as a person sent by God for the reformation of the house. The superiors of the hospital, with whom I acted in concert, more by obeying them than by giving them orders, consented that the regulations which I desired to introduce should at once be put into execution and observed. The bishop himself, and all the officials, were the first to authorize me to allow the poor to dine in the refectory, and to go and collect something for them in the city, to eat with their dry bread. This I did for three months, not without many rebuffs and contradictions, which increased from day to day to such a degree, (owing to a gentleman employed in the establishment and the lady superior of the hospi-

tal,) that I was obliged, in obedience to our vicar, to give up the charge of the dinner tables, which contributed very much to the good order of the house. This gentleman, who was embittered against me without any just cause that I am aware of, opposed, contradicted, and insulted me without intermission inside the house, and decried my management throughout the city and before the administrators of the hospital; a course of action which raised up a strong feeling against him amongst the poor inmates, who were all of them attached to me, with the exception of a few men and women of bad life, who were leagued with him against me. During this storm I kept silent and retired, leaving my cause entirely in God's hands, and trusting only in His help, notwithstanding the advice which was given me to the contrary. For this purpose I went to make a retreat of eight days, at the house of the Jesuit Fathers, where I was filled with great confidence that God and His Holy Mother would in some clear manner take my cause in hand. Nor was I deceived in my expectation. At the end of my retreat I found that this gentleman had fallen ill; and he died a few days afterwards.....The superioress, who was young and strong, followed him within six days to the grave. More than eighty of the poor people fell sick, and several died. The whole city was of opinion that the plague was in the hospital, and every one said that a curse had fallen upon the house. In the midst of all the sick and dead whom I assisted, I alone was never ill. After the death of these superiors I had to suffer still greater persecutions. A proud and passionate inmate of the hospital put himself at the head of a few of the badly disposed, in opposition to me, and in pleading his cause before the governors, condemned my con-

duct, because I had boldly but gently told the truth about all their drunkenness, quarrels, and scandals. Hardly one of the governors (although I receive nothing from the house, not even a morsel of bread, as I obtain my food from the charity of strangers) took the trouble to punish these faults, or to correct these internal disorders, and none of them had any thought but for the temporal and external good of the establishment.

"It is, however, true, my dear father, that amidst all these troubles and contradictions, of which I only give you a rough sketch, God has been pleased to make use of me to work several great conversions, both within the house and without. The hours for rising and for going to bed, for vocal prayer, for the Rosary in common, for the refectory in common, for the singing of hymns, and even for mental prayer for those who desire it, is still observed, notwithstanding the opposition made to it. Since I have been here, I have been holding a continual mission, hearing confessions almost every day from morning to evening, and giving good advice to a great number of persons, and God, my Father, whom I serve, although unfaithfully, has given me all this time many spiritual lights which I had not before, much ease in expressing myself, and in speaking at a moment's notice without preparation, perfect health, and a great enlargement of heart towards all around me. It is this which draws down upon me the approval of almost the whole city, a thing which ought indeed to make me fear for my salvation. I allow no women, not even the superioress of the house, to enter my room.

"I forgot to mention that every week I give a conference to about thirteen or fourteen of the best students of the college, and this I have done with the approbation of the late bishop."

Montfort, however, had not forgotten all this while the journey to Paris, which he had begun (as we have seen) the year before, and had interrupted at Poitiers at the request of the poor people of the hospital, or, rather, by a particular disposition of God's Providence. It may be, that he received at that time another letter from his sister, pressing him to go to her assistance, or, as is more likely, he was anxious to lose no more time in finding out, by consulting his directors, whether God called him to remain at the hospital. He therefore determined upon his journey. For this, he had to tear himself away from the affection of those who surrounded him, and who, in the fear of losing him for ever, opposed his departure.

CHAPTER III.

JOURNEY TO PARIS IN 1702.

Montfort took the road through Angers, in order to see one of his former directors of St. Sulpice, who was then residing in the seminary of that city; but instead of obtaining the advice which he sought for, he met with so cruel a reception, that never had any humiliation been more painful to him, and, on this occasion, for the first, and, perhaps, for the last time in his whole life, he could not refrain from a few words of complaint. On his arrival at Paris, he hastened to the country house of the seminary, to pay a visit to M. Leschassier, for whose advice he had expressly come so far. Here, again, he met with the same repulse, the same humiliations. He was defi-

nitely and publicly told, that no farther charge could be taken of the direction of his soul. But this time he showed no signs of trouble or pain. Those who saw him come back from Issy to Paris, might have thought that he had received the warmest welcome. Humiliation had only served to raise his courage. Whatever may have been the motives of this astonishing conduct on the part of such praiseworthy men, it is certain that the high esteem entertained for his sanctity in the seminary of St. Sulpice, was in no degree lessened. Not to mention M. Leschassier's confidential letter to Monseigneur de Poitiers, passages of which, so honourable to the servant of God, we have given above, we must here observe, that it was precisely by a director of the Sulpician seminary of Angers, a contemporary of Montfort, that the first history of his life was published. Nor can there be any doubt that this history was not written until after the traditions of the seminaries of Paris and Angers had been collected together, and the consent of M. Leschassier, the superior-general, obtained. When M. Blain, several years afterwards, recalled to M. Leschassier's recollection, the reception which he had given to Montfort, and which he himself had witnessed, the venerable superior replied, "You see, I am no judge of saints." "This answer," said M. Blain, "left me more satisfied than any apology which he could have made."

The life of Montfort does not, perhaps, contain anything more painful than this. He saw himself rejected by every one, without support, without counsel. The holiest men, and those who were most enlightened in the ways of God, refused to direct him, out of fear, it would seem, of going astray themselves, or of drawing upon themselves the blame of his conduct. Was he under the guid-

ance of the Holy Ghost, or of the father of lies? On this point the most able men were divided. Every one, according to his prejudices, had his own opinion about him. Many condemned him, because they were led away by some evil passion, or placed too blind a confidence in the calumnies which were circulated against him. Among good men, there were some, it is true, who, like the Bishop of Quebec, Mgr. de Saint Valier, did not conceal their approval; but the greater number were more reserved, and suspended their judgment until his future conduct should furnish fresh light for a decision. Whoever has not undergone a like trial, can form no idea of its bitterness; and the more desirous one is of giving oneself to God, the more painful and dreadful it becomes. It was on this subject that St. Peter of Alcantara once said to St. Teresa, who for a long time had been subjected to the same trial, that she had felt one of the greatest sorrows which can be felt in this world.

God continued His work, and fashioned His servant day by day more and more according to the model of all perfection, Jesus Christ, Whose life was itself a difficulty to the Jews, some approving of it, whilst others condemned it. Montfort, faithful in corresponding with the designs of God, knew how to turn to profit all these contradictions; he detached himself more and more from creatures, and in the meanwhile preserved his soul in peace. "I communicated to him, in a friendly way," says M. Blain, "the mortifying and humiliating remarks which were made about him, and he listened without allowing the least sign of annoyance to escape him; indeed, I was myself troubled, and he was not; and, as I took occasion to urge many objections against his conduct and kind of life, he also took occasion to give

me such just and solid answers, that I could not imagine the source whence he drew them. I was astonished to find, how, in a few words, he was able to refute the objections which were made against his manner of life."

It was then the month of September or October, 1702. It may be that Montfort, not having had any light thrown upon his vocation, as he desired, was really undecided as to his return to Poitiers, or, as is more likely, being obliged to prolong his stay in the capital on account of the spiritual interests of his sister, he may have been only desirous of filling up his leisure time; but be this as it may, he thought it right, as chaplain of a hospital, to offer his services to the hospital-general of the Salpetrière, which were accepted. He lost no time in giving proofs of his zeal and ability; but here again only to excite the envy of others. One day, on sitting down to dinner, he found a little note under his napkin, desiring him to withdraw. Once again, then, he was alone in the midst of Paris, without resources of any sort; but Providence still watched over him; indeed, the bare necessaries of life could hardly fail, where so little was required. He retired into a poor house in the Rue Pot de Fer, where, as M. Blain tells us, "he was so hidden and unknown, that I had great difficulty in finding him out in a place which so much resembled the stable of Bethlehem. It was, in fact, nothing more than a small recess underneath a staircase. His only furniture consisted of an earthenware basin, and, I believe, a wretched bed, which, like the place itself, was only fit for beggars and the poorest of the poor. But our Lord knew how to make up for his poverty, humiliations, and sufferings, by communicating Himself to him in so delicious a way, that the servant of God passed the greater part of his days

and nights in prayer. He even began to doubt, whether, the better to abandon himself to this powerful attraction, it might not be his duty to forbid himself, or, at least, to suspend the functions of his ministry. He took advice, but, according to all appearances, he was counselled to continue his zealous labours, for, at that time, an occasion presenting itself, he made no difficulty in availing himself of it."

The occasion in question arose out of an attempt, which was then being made, to restore peace among the hermits of Mont Valérien. For some time past the spirit of darkness, jealous of the edification given by these good solitaries, had but too well succeeded in sowing division amongst them. M. Madot, at that time their superior, and afterwards Bishop of Châlons-sur-Saône, had tried in vain, by every sort of means, to bring them back to their duty, when he cast his eyes upon the holy missionary. The latter betook himself to his appointed post, having been entrusted by the Archbishop of Paris, superior-in-chief of the hermitage, with a special commission. It was not by an air of authority, but by the simple practice of virtue, that he wished to conciliate the confidence of his brethren, and in this he perfectly succeeded. His recollection, his spirit of prayer, his mortification, and his fervour, astonished them. They saw him observe their rule with the greatest exactness, and give them in all things an example of the highest perfection. These men, so austere, seemed no longer to be so in his presence; for to all their penances he added special penances of his own. In the intervals of time between their common duties, they were sure to find him in the chapel, always on his knees and in prayer.

The Hermits were grieved to observe that his clothes were insufficient to protect him rom the

rigour of the season, and pressed him so much to make use of one of their habits, that he yielded to their entreaties. Clothed, therefore, in the white habit of these hermits, he lived in their midst as one of themselves, without any distinction. Struck, nevertheless, by so many examples of virtue, touched by the grace and unction of his words, gained over by his sweetness and humility, they were not long in conforming to his instructions, and joyfully performed whatever he asked of them in the name of his Divine Master. Each one humbly recognized his fault, suitable reparation was made, obedience became easier, and peace was perfectly re-established in this holy house. Montfort, having accomplished his mission, hastened to return to his closet in the Rue Pot-de-Fer.

He did not, however, lose sight of his sister's business, which was one of the causes which had brought him to Paris. On his arrival he had found her in a most distressing position, and he had not ceased, in the midst of his other occupations, to do everything for her in his power. His chief object was to obtain for her the means of satisfying the great desire which she had of becoming a nun. His endeavours were for a long time fruitless, and he had determined to send her back to her relations, when, through the medium of a holy priest of St. Sulpice, M. Bargeaville, he made the acquaintance of the Dames du Saint Sacrement, in the Rue Cassette. At their first interview, the superioress, knowing his extreme want, offered him the portion of food which it was the custom of the house to present every day to the Blessed Virgin, as chief superioress, and afterwards to give to some poor person. Montfort accepted it with humility and gratitude, and, during the rest of the time which he spent at Paris without employment, he came every day to

the parlour to receive this allowance. With the consent of his benefactors, he brought a poor man to share it with him, whom he always served first. The nuns were not slow in discovering, how rich in the gifts of Heaven, was this guest of theirs, who was so poor in the goods of this world; and God even revealed his interior to one of them, named Sister St. Joseph, a nun of the most sublime virtue. Their esteem for the holy priest, made them desirous of receiving his sister in their midst. He had offered her as a lay-sister; but when they came to see her, her talents and weakness of constitution, caused them to decide that she would be more useful in religion as a choir-sister. Two other postulants were on the point of setting out for one of their houses established at Rembervilliers; she might have left with them, but where was her dowry to be found? The charitable friends of the community had exhausted their resources in providing for the other two; in vain they were spoken to; and the eve of their departure arrived, without any means having been found. Montfort alone never despaired. He redoubled his prayers; and on the very day of their departure, a lady, less rich than those to whom application had been made in vain, came of her own accord to offer what was necessary for the dowry and the journey. He had, therefore, before leaving Paris, the consolation of seeing all the obstacles which, for so long a time, had interfered with his sister's reception, removed by the providence of God.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM MONTFORT'S JOURNEY TO PARIS IN 1702, TO HIS LEAVING THE HOSPITAL AT POITIERS, IN 1704.

After an absence of about three months, Montfort was recalled to Poitiers, by the prayers of all those who took a real interest in the spiritual and temporal well-being of the hospital. They had written to him to urge his return. This took place in the beginning of January, 1703, and he was welcomed by all the poor with lively demonstrations of joy. He himself, on seeing them again, experienced all the feeling of a father, who, after a long absence, finds himself once more in the midst of his beloved children. He resumed, without delay, his labours in the hospital, and soon gave proofs that his journey had in no way impaired his virtue or devotedness. There was on his part the same zeal, the same charity, the same love of every kind of privation. Since his departure, several wise regulations which he had made had been neglected; he reinforced their vigorous observance, and even added some fresh regulations with the approbation of the governors, under the countenance of the new bishop, Monseigneur Claude de la Poype de Vertrieu. This prelate was even good enough, at Montfort's recommendation, to interpose his authority, in order to obtain the appointment of a master to teach the children of the hospital to read and write, and to instruct them in piety.

The zeal of the holy chaplain was not so fully taken up inside the hospital, as to prevent him

employing it outside, either by preaching in the religious communities and the parish churches, or by undertaking the direction of many persons whom his sanctity had inspired to ask his assistance, or, lastly, by a large correspondence in writing, some letters at least of which deserve to be inserted here.

A few days after his return from Paris, he wrote to that sister, who at last, after so many difficulties, had entered the convent of Rembervilliers.

"My dear sister in Jesus Christ,

"May the pure love of God reign in our hearts! Suffer my heart to bathe itself along with yours in holy joy, my eyes to shed tears of devotion, my hand to mark upon the paper the holy gladness with which I am transported.

"I have not lost my last journey to Paris; you have lost nothing in your late desolations and crosses. Our Lord has had pity on you. The poor child has cried to Him, and the Lord has heard her, and has immolated her to Himself, truly, inwardly, for ever. Let no day pass with you without sacrifice and virtue, let the altar see more of you than your bed or table. Courage, my dear victim, ask pardon without ceasing of God, and of Jesus, the Sovereign Priest, for the sins I have committed against His Divine Majesty, by profaning the Most Holy Sacrament. I salute your guardian angel, who is the only one who has journeyed along with you. I am as many times all yours as there are letters in this page, provided you are as many times sacrificed and crucified with Jesus Christ, your only love, and Mary our good Mother."

Some time afterwards, having learnt that this same sister had fallen sick, he wrote her the following letter.

"My dear sister,

"May pure love reign in our hearts!

"I rejoice to hear of the sickness which our good God has sent you, to purify you like gold in the furnace; you ought to be a victim immolated on the altar of the King of kings, to His eternal glory. How high a destiny! How sublime a calling! I almost envy your happiness. But, what appearance has this victim of being perfectly agreeable to God, if she be not entirely purified from every stain, even the least? The Holy of Holies sees stains where the creature beholds only beauties; oftentimes His mercy anticipates His justice in purifying us by sickness, which is the ordinary furnace in which He purifies His elect. What a happiness for you that God Himself wishes to purify and prepare His victim according to His pleasure! How many souls does He not leave to purify themselves or to be purified by others! How many souls are there who are received as victims without passing through the trials and the sieve of God! Courage, then, courage! fear not the evil spirit, who will often say to you during your illness, 'You will never be professed on account of your uselessness. Go out of this convent, return to your relations; you will have to wander about upon the pavement; you will be a burden to all around you.' Let your body suffer, but let your heart be firm; for nothing is better for you at the present time than sickness. Pray and get prayers said for me, that Divine wisdom may be given me."

He wrote a third letter to his sister before the end of her noviciate. It is dated the 27th October, 1703.

"My dearest sister in Jesus Christ,

"May the pure love of God reign in our hearts!

"I thank our good God daily for the mercy which He shows you. Try to correspond with it by entire fidelity in all He asks of you. Unless God alone opens to you the door of the convent in which you are, do not enter it, even if you had a key of gold made for the very purpose of opening the door; for it would become to you the door of hell. A high vocation is required for the daughters of the Holy Sacrament, for their spirit is sublime. Every true nun of the Blessed Sacrament is a true victim both in body and soul; she is fed on continual and universal sacrifice; fastings and adoration sacrifice the body, obedience and abandonment sacrifice the soul; in a word, she dies daily by living, and she lives by dying. Do whatever you are told to do in the house. Ever yours."

It was for Montfort a great consolation to see his sister, at the end of her year of noviciate, admitted to make her profession under the name of Marie-Catherine of St. Bernard. He wrote to her, to congratulate her on her happiness, and to persuade her to make herself worthy of it.

"Dear victim of Jesus Christ,

"May the pure love of God reign in our hearts!

"I cannot enough thank our good God for the grace He has given you in having made you a perfect victim of Jesus Christ, a lover of the Most Holy Sacrament, and a reparation for so many bad Christians and unfaithful priests. What a happiness for your body to be immolated supernaturally during an hour of adoration of the Most

High! What an honour for your soul to do here below, without sensible pleasure, without knowledge, without the light of glory, what the angels and saints do in heaven with so much pleasure and light! O that a faithful worshipper might be found to render glory to my God on earth! But how seldom is one found, for all, even the most spiritual, are desirous of tasting and seeing, otherwise they become weary and grow cold; and yet, *sola fides sufficit*, faith alone is enough. In a word, faithful child of the Most Holy Sacrament, what utility, what riches, and what pleasure, for you to be ever at the feet of this rich and glorious Lord of lords! Courage, courage, be enriched and rejoice, while you consume away every day like a burning lamp. The more you give of your own, the more you will receive of God. After having congratulated you, have I not reason to congratulate myself, if not as your brother, at least as your priest? For what joy, what honour, what good for me to have the half of my blood making reparation by its loving sacrifices for the outrages which I, alas! so many times have offered to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as well by lukewarm communions as by forgetfulness and strange abandonment! Oh, I triumph in you, and in all your holy mothers, because you have obtained the graces of which I myself, and other ministers of the altar, render ourselves unworthy by our little faith. I beg of you, my sister, to have no other love but for Jesus alone in Mary, and through Mary for God alone and in Him alone. Ever yours."

To this period of his life may be assigned two letters written without date, to the nuns of the H. Sacrament. In consequence of the kindness shown to him at Paris, and the reception of his sister

into their community, he always kept up relations with them, while they, on their side, out of esteem for his virtue, were ever desirous of being in communion with him and his, in prayers and good works.

"Ah! what a divine letter you have written to me," he wrote, in answer to one of these nuns, "for it is full of news of the cross, without which, (whatever nature and reason may say), there will never be here below, even to the day of judgment, any true pleasure or solid good! Your soul is carrying a great cross, large and heavy. O, what a happiness for you! Have confidence, should God, Who is all good, continue to make you suffer, but He will not try you more than you can bear. It is a proof that assuredly you are loved by Him. I say, assuredly, for the best proof we can have that God loves us, is when we are hated by the world and assailed by crosses; that is to say, by privation of legitimate objects, by opposition to our most holy desires, by wrongs done to us the most cruel and afflicting, by persecutions and false interpretations on the part of the best intentioned persons and our best friends, by sickness the least to our taste, and the like. But why do I tell you what you yourselves know, better than I, from the taste and experience you have had of these things? Ah! if Christians only knew the value of crosses, they would go a hundred leagues to find one; for it is in this much-loved cross that the true wisdom is enclosed, for which I search day and night, with more ardour than ever. Ah! sweet cross, come to us for the greater glory of the Most High! This is what my heart often says, in spite of my weakness and unfaithfulness. After Jesus, your only love, I place all my strength in the cross. I beg of you to tell my sister, of whom you have written, that I adore Jesus Christ

crucified in her, and I pray to God that she may only remember herself, to offer herself for still more bloody sacrifices."

He replies in the following terms to another nun:

"What shall I say, my dear mother, in answer to your letter, except that the Holy Spirit says to you every day: 'Love of littleness and of abjection, love of a hidden life, and of silence, the sacrifice of yourself in silence to Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament, love of divine wisdom, love of the cross!' I am opposed in all things, I am captive; thank God, for me, for the little crosses He has given me, in proportion to my strength."

This love of suffering, which he recommended to others in such beautiful and touching terms, Montfort had now great need of, himself. On every side he was attacked. The devils, furious at the war he waged against them, made use, in their vengeance, of a power which God has given them more than once over other saints. They often ill-treated Montfort. A young cleric, well worthy of belief, by whom he had been accompanied in a retreat which he had made in a house at a little distance from Poitiers, assures us, that he heard several times, in the room in which the holy man was certainly alone, a loud noise, as if three or four persons were fighting with great violence. He clearly distinguished in the midst of the blows, the voice of Montfort which said, "I mock thee; I shall not fail in strength and courage, as long as I have Jesus and Mary with me; I laugh thee to scorn." Other persons have also declared, that they had seen him dragged violently along the ground, without perceiving any person who dragged him, and that they then heard him cry out distinctly, "O holy Virgin, my good Mother, come to my aid!"

Montfort had hardly less to suffer on the part of men. His admirable conduct in the hospital of Poitiers, his disinterested and powerful zeal; even these were of no avail in preventing his meeting with new difficulties at every step, and often even on the part of those who were entrusted with the government of the establishment. For a long time past, the man of God had become convinced, by painful experience, that in the management of houses of charity, nothing is to be expected from persons who, not having been trained in early life to the practice of charity and obedience, can hardly fail to follow their own private views, and consult their own interests, to the prejudice of peace and the common good. It was this consideration which had given birth to the congregations of the Daughters of Charity, and the Dames de Saint Thomas-de-Villeneuve; it was this also which determined the holy chaplain of Poitiers, to lay, as we shall shortly see, the foundations of a congregation, which was one day to render to France the greatest services, under the beautiful title of the Daughters of Wisdom.

CHAPTER V.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE CONGREGATION OF WISDOM IN THE HOSPITAL OF POITIERS, IN 1703.

There is every reason to believe that Montfort had conceived the idea of this congregation even before his journey to Paris. Our Lord had even, according to all appearance, given him certain lights upon the subject, and had made known to him, together with the name of the new congrega-

tion, the person who was to be, as it were, its foundation stone. This appears sufficiently clear from his conduct with regard to Mademoiselle Trichet, of whom we have now to speak. When he came, for the first time, to Poitiers, this young lady, daughter of a solicitor to the President's Court, in that city, was only seventeen years of age. Ever since then she had placed herself under the direction of the holy missionary, and had often told him of her desire to become a nun, without, however, his appearing to trouble himself about the matter. One day, when she complained of this, and begged of him to do for her what he had done for so many others, he said, "My daughter, console yourself, you will become a nun." "Yes, you will become a nun," he repeated, several times. Encouraged by these words, she tried, but always unsuccessfully, to enter several religious houses, the Daughters of Calvary, the Carmelites, and the Daughters of St. Vincent. Nevertheless, the promise of her spiritual father was always present to her mind, and for her it was an infallible oracle. But not until its accomplishment did she understand its full meaning. The man of God was obliged, sometimes, to be absent for a short time from Poitiers; but this separation never allowed him to lose sight of a soul so precious in the designs of God's Providence. He wrote to her, to console and encourage her. Once he told her to invite some pious persons, who were under his direction, at Poitiers, to meet together, for the purpose of prayer, between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, during the ten days from Ascension-Day to Pentecost, in order to obtain for themselves, and for him, the precious gift of wisdom. "Ah! when shall I possess this beloved and unknown wisdom!" he wrote on another occasion, from Paris; "when shall I be sufficiently fur-

nished and adorned to serve as a resting-place for her, who, at such a time as this, is wandering about forsaken and despised? Can you, dear child in Jesus, satisfy my desires and quench my thirst? You can, yes, you can." He ordered her to make a novena of communions with this intention. The fervent postulant eagerly complied with his request, and engaged sixty of her friends to do the same, little thinking that in doing so, she was working for herself.

Immediately after his return from Paris to Poitiers, the holy chaplain entered without delay upon the work which he had thus meditated and prepared. But here especially we may notice how different was his wisdom from the wisdom of the world. Full of the spirit of his Divine Master, Who chose for the founders of His Church men without learning, without fortune, and without name, Montfort began by choosing eighteen or twenty of the poor girls of the hospital. They were the most virtuous, but also the most poor. Some of them even were suffering from ulcers; others were deformed or blind. He gathered them together in a room of the hospital, which might indeed have been called the festival-room of the Householder of the Gospel. He named their place of meeting "La Sagesse," and to make it more worthy of its name, he placed in it a large cross, which is still preserved in the church of the hospital, in order to recall to their minds the mystery which the world calls folly, but which is none the less, in the judgment of St. Paul, the wisdom of God. To these young girls he gave a rule. They rose at four o'clock, spent an hour in prayer, recited five mysteries of the Rosary, heard Mass, and worked till dinner-time. At one o'clock they recited five more mysteries of the Rosary, worked until half-past five, and then

spent half-an-hour in prayer, after which they recited the remaining mysteries of the Rosary. They were bound to silence in all places and at all times, except during the hour of recreation after dinner, and half-an-hour after supper. Montfort chose out of their number a superioress to preside over their exercises.

This institution seemed calculated to be useful, both to the persons of whom it was composed, and to the hospital in which it formed a centre of piety, and a continual subject of edification; but the man of God was clear-sighted enough to expect otherwise. And, indeed, a company of persons so ill-favoured by nature was hardly fit to govern a hospital, much less to carry on a system of instruction and relief of the poor outside its walls. It lasted in fact but a very short time; but out of the midst of these poor girls we shall see another society gradually arise, which, in the designs of God's providence, and in those of Montfort, was one day to be the means of training many others. It is thus that the grain of corn perishes in the earth into which it is cast; but in the midst of its corruption a germ is preserved, which later on is developed, and brings forth a hundredfold.

This little society had hardly been formed when Mademoiselle Trichet, more than ever anxious to leave the world, went again to consult her director. "What do you wish me to become?" she said. "Where must I retire, in order to obey the designs which God has over me?" "Well," he smilingly replied, "come and live at the hospital." These words, thrown out as it were by chance, were for her a ray of light. All her doubts disappeared; it seemed as if God took her by the hand and showed her the road which she was to follow. The more she reflected, the more

her confidence increased. Again she returned to her director, and told him of all she felt. In order to try her, he represented to her that he had only spoken to her in jest, and that she would meet with many difficulties. "At least allow me," replied the zealous postulant, "to speak to Monseigneur." "Go, by all means," said the holy priest, "but I will not answer for your success." She went straight to the bishop, and cast herself at his feet, and declared to him that, utterly wearied with the world, her only desire for a long time had been to retire from it. She then begged to be allowed to be received into the hospital. The prelate, much edified, replied that he would go and speak to the governors about it, but that he did not think that they were in want of a new manager or head nurse. In fact he could only give her a negative answer. "Well then, Monseigneur," replied Mademoiselle Trichet, whose strong desire shrank back before no difficulty, "if these gentlemen will not receive me as manager or head nurse, perhaps they will not refuse to admit me as a poor inmate. If, out of kindness to me, you will be good enough to give me a letter to them, I hope to succeed." The bishop gave her the letter, and, full of confidence, she hurried to the directors of the hospital. The directors were extremely surprised at such a request on the part of a young lady of her rank. But upon the recommendation of the prelate they received her, not however as a poor applicant, but as assistant to the superioress.*

Montfort's views with regard to his penitent were very different from theirs. As soon as he heard of her arrival in the hospital, he arranged that she should be admitted into the number of

* See note p. 54.

the poor girls of "la Sagesse," not to preside over them, as the superioress desired, but to learn amongst them the practice of obedience. She was subjected to the same exercises, the same duties, and reduced to the same kind of food. After having caused her to pass through such trials as were likely to crucify her nature, her director proposed to her a change of dress, as soon as he thought that she was in a fit state to resist the attacks which this would most surely draw down upon her. Ten crowns of alms-money had to suffice for the expense. Mademoiselle Trichet sufficiently understood, from the smallness of the price, how poor her dress was to be; but her humility did not hesitate, and she only asked for time to obtain her mother's consent. Having obtained it, she at once bought some coarse stuff of an ashy grey colour, and a habit was made exactly as it is now worn by the Daughters of Wisdom. The holy almoner, assisted by another priest, blessed it, and giving it to the pious novice, said: "Take, my child, this habit, it will preserve you, and will be a great help to you against every sort of temptation." He wished her also to add to her baptismal names of Marie-Louise, the title "of Jesus." The statue of the Blessed Virgin before which she pronounced her vows is still preserved in the Hospital-General of Poitiers, and almost in the same place. This ceremony took place on the 2nd of February, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1703.

We can easily conceive how an event of this nature could not take place without exciting a great noise in the town. Relations, friends, strangers, all were speaking about it; but if a very few approved of the conduct of the confessor and his penitent, the rest were loud in their dis-

approval. Some denounced it as simply extravagant folly, while the more moderate blamed it as an excess of zeal. Even her mother, although at first she had given her consent, appeared afterwards the most indignant of all. For several months she exhausted every means in order to persuade her daughter to give up her habit. She carried her complaints in all directions, and had recourse to the authority of the bishop himself; but this prelate had approved of all she had done, and, far from persuading the new nun to forsake her habit, he recommended her to wear it continually.

On his side, her holy director, not content with strengthening his penitent against temptation, was also desirous that she should learn to brave human respect, and to look out, so to speak, for occasions of being despised by the world. Even at the very moment when her change of dress was exciting the greatest criticism, he ordered her to go, in her new habit, and walk through the most frequented streets of the town. Up to that time he had zealously trained her in all Christian virtues, and had never flattered nature in her; but from the moment when she put on the holy habit of religion, it may be said that he no longer observed any caution, and that he caused her to make rapid and unceasing strides towards the heroism of religious virtues. As long as the congregation of poor girls was in existence he kept her in the last rank, ceaselessly busied with whatever was most humiliating and painful. When, in the course of the same year, the directors, yielding to the importunity of certain men of bad life, had ordered the dissolution of the little society, Montfort saw in this only another motive, not to relax in any way his severity towards Sister Marie Louise of Jesus. Seeing that she was

charged to transmit to all the Daughters of Wisdom the virtues which were to form the peculiar spirit of their congregation, that is to say, love of crosses, contempt of themselves, and detachment from all creatures, there were no means which he did not put in use in order to fill her with this spirit. If we recall to mind all the means which had been formerly used by his own director to humble and mortify him, we shall be able to form an idea of what he himself did in order to train this fervent nun to holiness. It was not enough for him to try her himself, both in private and in public, and to reprove her sometimes with severity and contempt for the slightest faults; he even engaged other persons to wage the same war against her.

Montfort had reason to thank our Lord for the great progress which his disciple made in this sublime path of religious perfection. He had soon occasion to judge of it for himself. The contradictions which he met with in his management of the hospital were multiplied to such a degree that they placed him out of a position to do any good. Père La Tour, his confessor, and other persons worthy of respect, advised him to offer his resignation. He desired, however, to take the advice of Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus. Doubtless, he wished to prove the extent of her detachment. She did indeed regard Montfort as her visible angel, and he was so in reality; in losing him she would lose all, and at the age of twenty would have to remain alone, without support, in the midst of numberless contradictions. Nevertheless, believing that she saw in this course the greater glory of God, she did not hesitate to advise him to leave. Such perfect disinterestedness filled her holy director with joy, and he set out on the very same day, recommending her not

to leave the hospital for ten years. "If," he added, "the establishment of the Daughters of Wisdom should only take place at the end of that time, God will be satisfied, and His designs over you will be accomplished."

CHAPTER VI.

HIS MISSIONS AFTER LEAVING THE HOSPITAL OF POITIERS IN 1704, TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR ROME IN 1706.

If our Lord did not allow Montfort to continue his works of zeal in the hospital of Poitiers, it was because He desired to open up a still larger field to his labours. It was time that this light should be placed upon a candlestick, in order to shed abroad the rays of its splendour. The holy priest was now thirty-one, and all the good which he had hitherto done seemed to him as nothing. Like the traveller who hastens to arrive before night, he felt himself urged more than ever to put to profit the remainder of his days. With his mind enlightened by faith, and his heart inflamed with charity, he saw only that God was to be glorified and souls to be converted; and he reproached himself with not having as yet laboured to destroy the empire of sin, and established upon its ruins the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Shortly after his leaving the hospital he went to offer himself to Mgr. the Bishop of Poitiers, for the purpose of giving missions and retreats throughout the whole diocese. His talents in this kind of work were well known; his offer was joyfully accepted, and he was desired to open his

first mission at Montbernage, one of the suburbs of Poitiers. Drunkenness and blasphemy reigned in this place; the Sunday was not kept holy; all kinds of vice had met together there. At the powerful preaching of this holy missionary these disorders in great measure ceased, and gave place to practices calculated to encourage piety. In order not to repeat the same thing at each of the missions, which were henceforward to occupy the whole life of the man of God, we will afterwards give in its proper place a general sketch of the method which he followed in these holy exercises, the talents which he employed, the pious artifices to which he had recourse, the virtues which he practised, and the abundant fruits with which God did not fail to crown his zeal. We will therefore confine our remarks to those missions which seem to deserve particular mention.

Such was the mission which he gave at Montbernage, and during which he erected a chapel, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of "Queen of our hearts," where the faithful were to meet together for the recital of the Rosary. Montfort regarded the erection of this chapel as a good means to preserve the fruits of the mission, and under this persuasion he cast his eyes upon a deserted farm-house, which was situated advantageously enough for his purpose. But it was necessary first of all to buy it, to decorate it in a decent manner, and to place in it an altar, and a large statue of the Mother of God. How was he to persuade his hearers, who were for the most part poor, to undertake the expense? He spoke to them upon the subject, and all of them vied with one another in contributing to the good work. The chapel was soon ornamented according to his wish. To testify his joy, and upon the promise which they made him to be faithful in

coming there every Sunday and holiday to say their prayers and to chant the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, he himself gave them the statue of "his good Mother," which is still preserved. He also offered a Heart surrounded with thorns as a token of his own consecration to the "Queen of our hearts." For many years afterwards the faithful of Montbernage and its environs continued to assemble in crowds every evening in this place to recite the Rosary, and this custom, without doubt, contributed much to perpetuate the fruits of the mission. Its happy fruits were preserved up to the stormy days of the great French Revolution, during which the inhabitants of this suburb showed invariable attachment to religion and its ministers.

It is about this time that we must place the vocation of the first of the Brothers of the Holy Ghost. A young man of Anjou had come to Poitiers with the intention of embracing the rule of the Capuchins. The first church which he happened to see on arriving in the city was that of the "Pénitentes." He entered, began his prayer, and recited the Rosary with much fervour. Montfort, who happened to be then in the church, was struck by his devotion. He called him to him, and after having learnt the reason which had brought him to Poitiers, said to him but this one word of his Divine Master, "Follow me." Marvellous effect of grace! he obeyed him on the spot. This young man at once attached himself to his company, and in spite of difficulties of every kind which he met with, the virtue of the man of God inspired him always with so great an esteem, and he found in his company so many advantages for his soul, that nothing could ever separate him from him. After having been his companion up to his death, he remained ever afterwards in con-

stant attendance on his successors. He will be often spoken of under the name of Brother Mathurin.

The mission which Montfort gave in 1705 in the church of the Calvary Nuns was marked by an event which had somewhat distressing consequences. A number of striking conversions had filled the holy missionary with joy; he could not have desired a more complete success. But it was God's will that His servant should never be without crosses, and He proportioned them to the benedictions which He shed over His ministry. Montfort had one day spoken so strongly against bad books that many persons felt themselves urged to bring him all the books of this kind which they had in their possession, and they brought them in great numbers. He recalled to mind the conduct of St. Paul at Ephesus under like circumstances. He made a large heap of the books, in a square adjoining the church, with the design of publicly setting fire to it as the people were coming out after the sermon, and of repairing by this solemn act the scandal which their reading had caused. Up to this nothing had happened which could be blamed, but some private persons, moved by indiscreet zeal, wished to improve upon the idea of the holy missionary, and placed, without his knowledge, a sort of figure of the devil upon the heap of books. The rumour immediately spread amongst the populace that the devil was going to be burnt. A priest who had been in Montfort's company during the mission, but who had taken umbrage at his great reputation, thought this a favourable occasion to discredit him in the good opinion of his superiors. Without, therefore, giving him any warning, he went at once to the Vicar-General, who, in the absence of the bishop, administered the diocese,

and described to him minutely the ridiculous nature of the proposed ceremony. The Vicar, without any farther examination, immediately mounted his carriage, and drove straight to the church. He found the holy missionary in the pulpit, and gave him a reprimand before all the people, in which nothing was spared which could possibly render it bitter to his feelings. The humble priest knelt down to listen to him, and at once came down from the pulpit without opening his mouth to justify himself. All the bad books were soon taken away and dispersed, so that the scandal began again. This was the only thing which grieved the man of God; for to him humiliation was good fortune, and experience had already taught him more than once that it did but render the fruits of his ministry more abundant. Indeed, on the following day, the closing of the mission was not the less edifying for what had happened. Another Vicar-General, M. Revol, Bishop-elect of Orleans, preached upon the occasion, and extolled Montfort's merit as highly as it had been depreciated the day before. Nevertheless, out of self-love and levity, many stories were afterwards circulated of a nature to prejudice the minds of men against the holy missionary. They even reached Saint Sulpice, and we shall afterwards see how his enemies, in order to destroy his character, took advantage of the lying reports which they themselves had invented.

Of all the other missions which Montfort gave in the Diocese of Poitiers, we will only mention that of Saint-Saturnin, a parish of the episcopal city. The concourse of people was as great as in all the preceding ones, and the abundance of graces even greater. At the end of the suburb there was a garden ornamented with four colossal figures, and called, for this reason, the Garden of

the Four Figures. This was the general rendezvous of the libertines of the city, and the sins committed there may easily be imagined. The holy missionary thought himself obliged to make reparation for so many outrages to the Divine Majesty. After having laboured the whole day in the mission, he retired at night into this garden, and spent there several hours in prayer and penance. Prostrate on the ground, like his Divine Master in the Garden of Olives, he recalled to mind, in the bitterness of his heart, the iniquities with which the place was stained. Tears bathed his face, and his blood flowed forth under the blows of a cruel discipline; he would have wished, if possible, at such a price to purify the dishonoured soil. At last he resolved to make a public reparation by means of those very persons who more than once had taken part in the disorder. On the 6th of February, 1706, the day assigned for the general procession of the mission, he directed its course towards the garden. Arrived on the spot, he gave the people an instruction such as might have been looked for from a saint, and from a saint who had so well prepared for the occasion. His desires were fulfilled; the reparation was as perfect as it was public. On every side the people burst into tears and sobs. All confessed themselves guilty, and asked for mercy, when on a sudden, the preacher, illuminated by a supernatural light, spread consolation over all hearts by assuring them, in the tone of a prophet, that "one day the place in which they then were would become a place of prayer, and would be served by nuns." A few days afterwards, as he was passing through the suburb, he met with a poor man, who was suffering from an incurable disease, and was abandoned by every one. He took him on his

shoulders, and, not knowing where to place him, he carried him to the Garden of the Four Figures, into a little chamber formed out of the rock. Before long he brought two, and then three other poor men as wretched as the first, and entrusted them to the care of a few young women, who added to the number of their patients in proportion to the increase of the alms bestowed upon them. Thus, without thinking of it, Montfort was the first to help to verify his own prediction; but it was only completely fulfilled when, long afterwards, the Hospital of Incurables, built on this same site of ground, by a Grand Prior of Acquitaine, after having been administered for ten years by secular persons, passed in 1758 into the hands of the Daughters of Wisdom. This house has always been remarkable for extraordinary piety amongst its sick; a circumstance which has ever been regarded as the effect of the prayers of the servant of God.

About this time Madame d'Armagnac, the wife of the Governor of Poitiers, lay at the last extremity, given up by the physicians. Père La Tour, Montfort's confessor, begged of him to say Mass for her. After having said the Mass, Montfort went to inform him that the lady would recover her health. The father, who was astonished at nothing on the part of a man so highly favoured by Almighty God, having desired him to carry the good news himself to the sick lady, he at once obeyed. On entering the sick room, he said: "Madame, you will not die of this illness; it is God's will that you should still remain upon earth, and that your days should be prolonged, in order that you may continue your charities to the poor." And indeed, from that moment the sick lady began to recover, and was soon quite well, and lived for twelve years longer.

These actions, and others of the same kind, independently of the virtues and success of the apostolic man, were no doubt quite capable of giving authority to his mission, and of conciliating both esteem and confidence, but it is not the Master's will that His dearest disciples should be treated otherwise than He was treated: their portion is the cross. Montfort had thought of giving a retreat to the nuns of St. Catherine at Poitiers, and had already begun the spiritual exercises, when he received an order from the bishop to discontinue his holy ministry in the diocese. This was the consequence of what had happened at the Calvary Mission. As the severity and precipitation with which the Vicar-General had acted in the matter had been blamed by several persons, his friends had been beforehand with the bishop, in trying to justify his conduct with regard to Montfort. This they did so skilfully that the prelate was imposed upon, and thought that he could no longer avail himself of the labours of the holy priest, although he was by no means ignorant either of his virtues or ability. This was not the only time that the good missionary was thus stopped, or at least held back, in the exercise of his zeal. In order not to return to this subject, we will here make a few general reflections, which can easily be applied to particular cases.

Montfort, like many of the saints, St. Philip Neri, for example, St. Ignatius, and Venerable Boudon, was, it is true, the object of painful measures on the part of certain ecclesiastical superiors; not, however, that he was ever suspended, in the strict sense of the word. God, no doubt, permitted this, in order to quench the thirst for humiliations with which he was devoured, and also in order to divide amongst other dioceses the abundant fruits of his ministry. A torch

which is shaken, does but shed forth a more burning flame. In other respects, no accusation was ever brought against either his doctrine or morals. Even his enemies were obliged to pay homage to the heroism of his virtues, and reproached him only with singularity and excess of zeal. On these occasions, when wounded nature is so often awakened, and shown in its true light, his behaviour was always that of a saint. Far from murmuring, resisting, or justifying himself with warmth, he appeared like a lamb before its shearers. Not a complaint, not a moment of delay in obeying, very often not even a word of justification. Thus, what might have cast a shadow over his virtue, did but render it more brilliant. As for the prelates who treated him with severity, the sequel of this history will prove that they were deceived by intrigues, or carried away by the importunities of his enemies, who could not fail to be numerous. Indeed, not to speak of men of wicked and licentious life, who are never opposed with impunity, how many good men are there, who are too ready to believe false reports, and too hasty in taking alarm at the outcry which is always raised at the sight of extraordinary zeal! Again, how many Pharisees are there, who, out of jealousy, are always ready to say of Christ's servants, what was once said of their Master, "See how all men follow Him!" Above all, how many are there, who cannot, without secret vexation, look upon the contrast which a holy life presents, when compared with their own! But Montfort's most bitter enemies were the Jansenists, whose hatred took advantage of every intrigue, and every false report, to persecute, without intermission, from one end of France to the other, all those who declared themselves opposed to their errors. They never forgave the holy priest for his refusal to

labour at Nantes in a society of their friends, and for his inviolable attachment to their greatest antagonists, the Jesuits, his old masters and usual directors. Their hatred could only increase, when he received from the Sovereign Pontiff a special mission to combat this heresy. They had great power, as is well known, with several of the bishops, some of whom favoured, and even shared, their errors. It is not, then, astonishing, that they should have succeeded in showering many blows on the servant of God, which should never have fallen upon him. However, according to all appearance, at least in certain cases, it was only a question of restricting his powers; perhaps, even, he was simply counselled not to use them; for otherwise, how can we reconcile the suspension with which it is pretended that Montfort was visited in September 1710, by the Bishop of Nantes, with the authentic certificate of May 1713, in which the same prelate attests, not only that "*this zealous missionary is to be commended for his good life and sound doctrine, for his piety and modesty, but also, that he has never been, to his knowledge, under any ecclesiastical censure.*" It is, at least, incontestable, that this severity, whatever may have been its nature and cause, never in any way prevented the servant of God from maintaining, even in places which had witnessed his humiliations, a spotless character and the reputation of a saint. This was juridically attested even before the bishops of those dioceses, by a great number of persons whose age rendered them worthy of belief.

But we must return to the measures taken by the Bishop of Poitiers, which might, indeed, excite our astonishment, coming, as they did, from so good and Catholic a prelate, did we not know that the Abbè de Saint-Cyran, the leader of Jan-

senism in France, had, unfortunately, only too successfully propagated that heresy, both amongst the clergy and the people. The favourable testimony borne, a few years afterwards, to the memory of the servant of God, by the same Bishop of Poitiers, proves that he had been imposed upon, and that even, in deeming it to be his duty to remove Montfort from his diocese, he had not, on that account, ceased to esteem either his talents or his virtue. The latter, under these circumstances, did not conceive it to be his duty to justify himself, and in renouncing the pursuit of his apostolic labours in the diocese, he resolved to glorify God only by his silence and submission. He came, the more readily, to this resolution, because it seemed to him an occasion, brought about by Providence, of executing a project which he had planned a long time before. This was to make a pilgrimage to Rome, in order to submit to the successor of St. Peter the desire which he had always had of preaching the Gospel to the heathen, and of shedding, in their midst, his blood for Jesus Christ. Such, at least was the principal object of this journey. He could not, however, undertake it without beforehand consulting his confessor; but, once assured of his consent, he lost no time in setting out.

BOOK III.

FROM MONTFORT'S JOURNEY TO ROME, WHERE HE WAS NAMED MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC, IN 1706, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS LABOURS IN THE DIOCESE OF LA ROCHELLE, IN 1711.

CHAPTER I.

MONTFORT'S JOURNEY TO ROME IN 1706.

The venerable missionary, when he saw himself upon the point of leaving Poitiers, and those whom he had converted to Jesus Christ, could not help feeling much sorrow at the thought of the danger to which they would be exposed, after his departure, of returning to their evil ways. To prevent, as much as lay in his power, this misfortune, he wrote to them the following general letter, almost the whole of which we place before our readers.

"God alone!

"Dear inhabitants of Montbernage, Saint-Saturnin, Saint-Simplicien, La Resurrection, and other parishes, and all others who have profited by the mission which Jesus Christ, my Master, has given you, health in Jesus Christ and Mary!

"Not being able to speak to you by word of mouth, because holy obedience forbids me to do so, I take the liberty of writing to you, on my departure, as a poor father to his children, not

indeed to teach you anything new, but to confirm you in the truths which I have taught you.

"The Christian and fatherly friendship which I bear you, is so strong, that I will carry you for ever in my heart, through life and death, into eternity. May I forget my right hand rather than forget you, wherever I may be, even at the holy altar; what do I say? even to the ends of the world, even to the gates of death! Be persuaded of this, provided always that you are faithful to practise what Jesus Christ has taught you by His missionaries, and by my unworthy self, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh.

"Bear in mind, then, my dear children, my joy, my glory, and my crown, to have a burning love for Jesus Christ, and to love Him through Mary. In all places and before all persons, show forth your true devotion to the most Holy Virgin, our good Mother, that you may be everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ, and that you may constantly bear your cross in the footsteps of this good Master, and gain the crown and kingdom which awaits you. Fail not to fulfil and faithfully practice your *promises of baptism*, to say your rosary every day, in public or in private, and to frequent the sacraments, at least every month.

"I pray, my dear friends of Montbernage, in whose keeping is the image of my good Mother, and my own heart, to continue and increase the fervour of their prayers; not to suffer with impunity in their suburb, either blasphemies, or profane swearers, or singers of filthy songs, or drunkards; I say with impunity, for if they cannot stop them by reproving them with zeal and gentleness, at least let them not fail to do even public penance for their sins; were it only to say one Ave Maria in the place where the scandal has been given, or to make some other little act of reparation, candle

in hand, either in their own room or in the church. This is what you must do, and, by God's help, you will persevere in His service. I say also the same to other places.

My dear children, you must be an example to all Poitiers and its environs. Let no one work on holidays of obligation; let no one set up a stall, or even open his shop, unless in the case of real necessity, recognised as such by your worthy parish priest; and this you must observe in opposition to the practice of those who rob God of His own day, and who, by so doing, notwithstanding all the fine pretexts which they bring forward, are unfortunately hurling themselves into damnation. Do not work on holidays in any way, and God, I promise you, will bless you, both in spiritual and temporal things, so that you will want for nothing that is needful. I pray, my dear fish-sellers of Saint-Simplicien, as also the butchers and hucksters and others, to continue the good example which they are giving the whole city, by the practice of what they learnt during the mission.

"I pray you all in general, and everyone in particular, to accompany me by your prayers in the pilgrimage which I am about to make for you, and for many; I say *for you*, for I am undertaking this long and painful journey, under Providence, in order to obtain of God, by the intercession of the Holy Virgin, perseverance for you; I say *for many*, for I carry in my heart all the sinners of Poitou, and of other places, who, alas! are falling into hell. Their souls are so dear to my God that He has given all His Blood for them, and shall I give nothing? He has made for them so many long and painful journeys, and shall I do nothing? He has risked His own life, and shall I not risk mine? Ah! it is only an

idolater or a bad Christian who is not touched at the loss of these infinite treasures, these souls redeemed by Jesus Christ. Pray then for them, my dear friends, and pray for me also, that my malice and unworthiness may place no obstacle in the way of whatever it may be the will of Almighty God and His Holy Mother to work through my ministry. I go in search of the Providence of God, help me to find it; I have many and great enemies opposed to me; all the worldly-minded who esteem and love the decaying and perishable things of earth laugh at me, despise and persecute me; all hell has plotted my ruin, and perhaps will raise up against me all its strength. In the midst of all this I am very weak, nay, weakness itself; very ignorant, nay, ignorance itself; and even more than this, which I dare not tell you. There can be no doubt that, being alone and poor, I shall perish, unless the most Holy Virgin, and the prayers of good souls, and especially your own prayers, come to my aid, and obtain for me from God the gift of His Holy Word, or of Divine Wisdom, which will be a remedy against all my evils, and a powerful weapon against all my enemies. With Mary all becomes easy; I place my confidence in her, although the world and hell should storm against me, and I say with St. Bernard, *Filioli, hæc mea maxima fiducia est, hæc tota ratio spei meæ.* Get these words explained to you, I should never have dared to put them forward of myself.* It is through Mary that I look for and shall find Jesus, that I shall crush the serpent's head, and that I shall overcome my enemies and myself, to the greater glory of God.

"Farewell, and yet not farewell; for if God

* Those who have accused the Ven. Servant of God of teaching extravagant devotion to Our Lady, would do well to meditate on these words. (Tr.)

keeps me in life I will again pass through these parts, either to remain here, subject to the obedience of your illustrious prelate, who is so zealous for the salvation of souls, and so compassionate for our infirmities, or to pass on elsewhere, because, since God is my Father, I have as many homes as there are places where sinners unjustly offend Him.

"LOUIS MARIE DE MONTFORT,

"Priest, and unworthy slave of Jesus in Mary."

This letter written, the holy priest, after having recommended Brother Mathurin to await his return either at Poitiers or not far from that city, set out the very same day on his journey. It was then about the beginning of Lent. Not wishing to travel except at the expense of Providence, his first act was to give away to the poor the few small coins which still remained to him. A young Spaniard had asked leave to accompany him, and he consented on condition that he would give away the little which he possessed. To get him to do this, he promised to provide for his expenses. The only provisions for his journey consisted of the Holy Bible, his Breviary, a crucifix, his rosary, an image of the Blessed Virgin, and his staff. We can have some idea of what the fatigue must have been of so long a journey on foot, whilst he fasted every day; but it is more difficult to form a just idea of all the humiliations which attended this journey. Often repulsed, and even ill-treated, as if he had been some wretched vagabond, the holy pilgrim passed at times whole days without a morsel of bread, and whole nights without any shelter. It is true that, ordinarily, as he himself has told us, after a bad day, Providence, which watched over him like a good

mother, made it up to him on the next; but he was sometimes obliged, during this journey, to depart from the rule which he had laid down for himself, of never accepting the alms offered for his Masses.

His devotion to the Mother of God could not fail to detain him some days at Loreto, in order to pray in the house in which Mary had lived, and where the Son of God Himself had deigned to dwell, and which, ever since the thirteenth century, when it was carried into these parts by the ministry of angels, has been enriched by the munificence of Popes and Kings, and has attracted pilgrims from all parts of the world. Holy memories, no doubt, must have crowded upon Montfort's burning soul. On entering this holy dwelling he must have thought himself back again in the days when the Son and the Mother dwelt there; he seemed to see them and to hear them. How must the piety which was never absent from him at the altar, have been inflamed at these thoughts every time he said Mass within its walls! An inhabitant of Loreto was so edified with his devotion that he entreated him to lodge and board at his house all the time that he remained in that town. The holy traveller accepted his offer, and spent about fifteen days in a place so rich in holy memories and graces.

Montfort continued his journey with fresh courage, when, on a sudden, there appeared on the horizon the dome of the church of S. Peter's. He threw himself upon his knees, and prostrated himself upon the ground; he remained an instant buried in profound reverence and love. Then, raising himself, he took off his shoes, and walked barefoot the two leagues which still separated him from Rome. He recalled to mind how Peter had once, like him, entered staff in hand, this capital

of the world, without friends, without attendants, with no other riches than the poverty of a Crucified God. He thought of the ever-enduring miracle which has placed a cross upon the Capitol, and made the Cæsars' throne the see of the poor fisherman of Galilee. Filled with these thoughts he entered Rome. It was not curiosity that had led him there; he therefore did nothing to satisfy it. Thus, on his return, when asked by some one what he had seen in the country of the fine arts, he simply answered "Nothing."

His only thought was to fulfil the principal object of his journey; and when he thought himself sufficiently prepared by his visits to the holy places, and by the other devotions which his piety had suggested, he asked for an audience of the Sovereign Pontiff, who at that time was Clement XI. The audience was granted on the 6th of June. He himself afterwards said that at the sight of the successor of St. Peter, he had felt an extraordinary sense of reverence, as if he had seen Jesus Christ Himself in the person of His Vicar. He was not, however, in any way confused, and after having kissed the feet of His Holiness, he read to him with confidence a little Latin address. The Venerable Pontiff listened to him with a kindness worthy of the common father of the faithful, and told him that he might speak in French, as he himself understood it sufficiently well to be able to reply to him in that language. Montfort expressed to him the desire which he had long had to preach the Gospel to the heathen, in the hope of shedding his blood for the faith; he then added that he had come expressly to learn the will of God from the mouth of His Vicar, and that he was ready to labour in any part of the world to which he might be sent. "Sir," replied the Pontiff, stretching out his hand towards

France, "you have in your own country a field worthy of your zeal." He then pointed out, more in detail, the object and means of his mission, and enjoined him to combat the errors of Jansenism, which he himself had condemned, to teach the Christian Doctrine to children and to the people, and to try and make the ancient spirit of Christianity flourish again, by the renewal of the promises of baptism. He next conferred upon him the title of Missionary Apostolic, recommending him always to make use of it in perfect submission to the bishops who might call him into their dioceses. More than this, he granted him the privilege of giving several benedictions, and attached to the crucifix which the holy pilgrim presented to him a plenary indulgence for all those who, truly contrite, should kiss it at the hour of death, whilst pronouncing the holy names of Jesus and of Mary. The words of the Sovereign Pontiff made the same impression upon the heart of this man of faith as if he had heard them from the very mouth of the Saviour of the world, and they remained ever graven upon it. Fully assured by these words of the will of our Lord, his only desire now was to fulfil it, and the whole sequel of his life will shew how perfectly he accomplished it.

Montfort lost no time in leaving Rome to return to France. He found his journey sown with the same humiliations and the same cruel refusals as had attended his journey to the Holy City; and, in addition to this, the excessive heats of July and August were enough to make his return extremely painful. His feet soon became so blistered that he was obliged to take off his shoes. His hat under his arm, his shoes in one hand, in the other his rosary, and staff surmounted by the crucifix which had been indul-

genced by the Pope, it was thus that the holy traveller walked along. At length he arrived, on the 25th of August, the feast of St. Louis, his patron saint, at the Priory of Ligugé, near Poitiers, where Brother Mathurin awaited him. He was at first recognised with difficulty, so sunburnt was he, and weakened by fatigue.

CHAPTER II.

FROM MONTFORT'S JOURNEY TO ROME TO HIS RETURN TO HIS OWN DIOCESE IN 1706.

Montfort had re-entered France with the intention of exercising his holy ministry wherever the bishops might call him, in conformity with his apostolic mission. Being unable to continue his labours in the diocese of Poitiers, what course could he now take, except to return to his own diocese? He came, therefore, to this determination at the end of eight days spent in retreat at the house of an ecclesiastic who was one of his friends, for the purpose of recovering from what he called the dissipation of his journey. He required indeed some such short repose to repair his strength; yet, notwithstanding, instead of going directly to his own family, he determined to make two new pilgrimages in order to draw down upon his apostolic labours the protection of the Mother of God and of the archangel St. Michael.

His first pilgrimage was to Nôtre-Dame-des-Ardilliers, at Saumur. We may judge of the fervour with which he performed it by the way in which we have already seen him undertake a simi-

lar journey to Nôtre-Dame de-Chartres, during the time of his residence at Saint-Sulpice. Among the remarkable circumstances of his pilgrimage to Saumur may be noticed the service which he rendered to the Daughters of Providence, in the person of their foundress, Sister Jeanne de la Noue, who died in the odour of sanctity in 1736. This humble servant of our Lord was being led by extraordinary ways and gave herself up to austerities which many found excessive. Her nuns were in great trouble upon this account; she herself feared that she might be suffering from illusions. At soon as Montfort was known to have arrived at Saumur, he was on all sides eagerly consulted upon the subject. At first the man of God appeared to be in doubt; but one day, after having said Mass to obtain light from God, he confirmed Sister Jeanne de la Noue, in a tone of great confidence, in the resolution she had taken. "Continue," he said, "as you have begun; it is the Spirit of God Who guides you, and Who inspires the austerities which you practice. Hold for certain that in this lies your vocation, and the state to which God calls you." This advice was received in the light of an oracle, and the result shewed that it had come from heaven.

The object of Montfort's second pilgrimage was Mont-Saint-Michel, now a state prison, but at that time a celebrated abbey and place of pilgrimage, where, from all parts, men came to venerate the glorious leader of the heavenly host. In former times he had appeared there, and the name of the mountain still bears witness to the miracle. The holy missionary had always been very devout to the holy angels;* but now that the Head of the

* In his devotion to the Holy Angels the influence of M. Boudon's writings may be distinctly traced. Devotion to the Holy Angels, the Slavery of our Blessed Lady, and God Alone, for which

Church had assigned to him France as the theatre of his labours, he made it a duty to have a special devotion to St. Michael, who from time immemorial has ever been honoured as the protector of that kingdom. Moreover, he believed himself to be under the very special protection of this powerful archangel. He once mentioned this in confidence to Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus, and at another time, when threatened by several young men, he told them that the great St. Michael was his protector, and that he had nothing to fear from them. All these motives were powerful enough to lead him to a place where this glorious archangel was so specially honoured. He arrived there on the 28th of September, the vigil of his feast. The very first evening he gave a striking proof of the confidence he had in his protection. In the same house where he lodged, some men exited by wine were uttering horrible oaths and blasphemies. They were overheard by the holy priest, and immediately rising up, and without any fear of their brutal anger, he ran into their midst, and reproached them for their wickedness in such energetic terms, that he forced them to withdraw without daring to answer him. "He himself," says Brother Mathurin, "secretly retired, and expiated on his own body, by penance, the sins of these wretched men."

In order to pass from Mont-Saint-Michel to

that great servant of God, whose writings have left their impress upon so many holy minds, was chiefly remarkable, was also a special characteristic of de Montfort's life. It will be remembered that the expression "God Alone," was a favourite one with that true daughter of St. Dominic, Mother Margaret Hallahan, and that she was especially fond of the writings of M. Boudon. The wider circulation of his writings through the excellent translations recently given us by Mr. Thompson cannot fail to be of incalculable benefit to English Catholics. Father Faber reminds us, in a note to the Treatise on the True Devotion, (p. 112,) that Boudon himself states that English Catholics were remarkable for their devotion to the Holy Slavery in the seventeenth century.—Trans.

Montfort, his birth-place, the holy missionary took the road through Rennes, with the design, no doubt, of visiting his uncle the priest, of whom we have already spoken. He appeared not to know that his father and mother were at that time at Rennes. On his arrival his love of poverty and retirement led him to choose for his lodging the house of a poor woman, who took in only the very poorest lodgers, and provided them, on modest terms, with the usual nourishment of poor people in that country, namely, "galette,"* and a little milk. His first visits were to the poor of the hospital. He had been already two days at Rennes without having seen his uncle, when the latter, having heard of his arrival, went to see him. The marks of friendship which he gave him were accompanied with a few reproaches. After having told him that his father and mother were in the town, he blamed him for not having informed himself sooner of this fact, and said to him that he was astonished at such conduct with regard to parents to whom he was so dear; and that it seemed to him contrary to the respect due to them, both by nature and religion. He added that he was dishonouring his family by thus remaining under their very eyes in a low out-of-the-way place, where, according to all appearance, he was in want even of necessaries. The servant of God, who was never in the habit of replying, except by silence, to reproaches made to him, thought it due to his parents to exculpate himself upon this occasion. "He had taken heed," he replied to his uncle, "not to forget what he owed to his parents. His heart was penetrated for them with the most respectful and tender feelings, and God was witness of the prayers which he

* A round thin cake made of buckwheat.

daily offered in their behalf. He thought by that means to show his love in a far more solid manner than by useless visits, which could only hinder him from giving up his whole self to his Heavenly Father's business. As for his kind of life, he did not think it necessary to justify it, except by the example of his Divine Master." The uncle admired in his nephew these supernatural sentiments, whilst the latter, without any farther pressing, went at once to pay a visit to his parents. He even consented to dine at his father's house, where all the family were assembled. It was a true picture of the agape of the first Christians. The missionary, on entering the room, knelt down and said, according to his custom, the prayer, "Visita quæsumus." When dinner was served, he began by preparing the portion for the poor out of whatever he could find best upon the table. During the meal he spoke only of God, and in a manner as easy as it was touching. His parents tried to keep him in the house, but all their endeavours were useless, as he would not consent to change the poor lodging which he had taken on his arrival.

In order that our readers may the better understand the feelings of Montfort with regard to his family, we will place before them a letter which he wrote from Poitiers, to his mother, on the 18th of August, 1704. It will be seen how a truly Christian spirit of detachment, far from extinguishing in his heart the love of his parents, did but purify it, and render it more really useful.

"Prepare for death, which is pressing hard upon you by many tribulations. Suffer these in a Christian spirit, as you now do. We must suffer and carry our cross daily; it is necessary. It is infinitely to your advantage, to be so poor as even

to be brought next door to the hospital, or poor-house, if this is the will of our great God; to be despised, so as even to be forsaken by all around you, and to die even while still alive. Although I do not write to you, I never forget you in my prayers and sacrifices; I love and honour you all the more perfectly, because flesh and blood have no part either in the love or honour which I bear you. Do not trouble me about my brothers and sisters; I have done for them what God has asked of me through charity; I have, for the present, no temporal goods to give them, being the poorest of the poor; I place them, together with the whole family, in the hands of Him who has created them. Let me be regarded as dead, in order that no one may think of me; let me, I repeat, be regarded as dead; I renounce all claim, either of seeing or touching anything belonging to the family in which Jesus Christ has caused me to be born. I renounce everything except my title, because this I am forbidden to do by the Church; my goods, my country, my father and mother, are above, I know no longer any one according to the flesh. It is true that I am under great obligations, both to you and to my father, for having brought me into the world, for having nurtured me, and brought me up in the fear of God, and for having done me innumerable good services. This is why I give you a thousand thanks, and pray daily for your salvation, and I shall continue to do so during your life and after your death; but do anything more for you, I cannot, for you must understand, that the words "nothing" and "I," have one and the same meaning, so far as my old family is concerned. In the new family to which I belong, I have espoused wisdom and the cross, in which are all my temporal and eternal treasures in heaven and on earth; but so great are these, that were

they known, Montfort would be the envy of the richest and most powerful kings of earth. No one knows the secrets of which I speak, or very few, at least; you will know them in eternity, if you have the happiness to be saved, for perhaps you will not be saved; tremble, and love more than ever. I pray my father, in the name of my Father who is in heaven, not to touch pitch, for he will be defiled; not to eat dust, for he will be choked; not to swallow smoke, for he will be stifled. I salute your guardian angel, and I am ever yours in Jesus and Mary,

"MONTFORT,

"Priest and unworthy slave of Jesus, living in Mary."

During his stay at Rennes, which hardly lasted fifteen days, Montfort preached in several churches, and always with the greatest success. A circumstance which occurred at the convent of the Calvary Nuns, deserves to be specially noticed. He had been expected to preach, and a great number of persons had assembled to hear him. The holy priest, on arriving at the church, and perceiving this numerous audience, went into the sacristy, and then, after a moment's recollection, at once went out and thus addressed the people. "You have come in crowds to hear me; you think, perhaps, my dear brethren and sisters, to hear a great preacher, an extraordinary man; I shall not preach at all; I shall simply make my usual prayers, as if I were alone in my room.". A faldstool was placed for him in the nave; he knelt down, and then, pouring forth his heart in the presence of his Saviour, he spoke so beautifully and touchingly upon suffering, that they who heard him felt themselves earnestly inflamed with

the love of Jesus Crucified. His prayer finished, he said the rosary aloud, and then, going to the door of the church, with his "bonnet carré"* in his hand, he there made a collection in aid of the restoration of the parish church of St. Saviour.

Montfort also preached in both of the seminaries, and the directors were so satisfied with his sermons, that they pressed him to remain amongst them, in order to assist them in giving country missions. But, being no long tied to any diocese, he thought that he could not do better than place himself at the disposal of his own bishop, leaving it to Providence, to afterwards direct his movements according to God's good pleasure. He therefore left Rennes for Montfort, his birth-place, where he arrived on the feast of All Saints', but so as not to be discovered, for he wished to owe everything to charity, and nothing to personal consideration. He even avoided entering the town, and stopped at a little village about a quarter of a league distant. It was his intention to lodge with a poor woman who had been his nurse. He sent Brother Mathurin, to beg of her, in charity, to give shelter to a poor priest and his companion, a proposal which was not to the taste of the good woman. Montfort presented himself at two or three other houses, and asked, for the love of our Lord, for a little straw for himself and his companion. Everywhere he met only with refusals. At last, he asked, who was the poorest person in the village; the cabin of a poor old man, named Pierre Balin, was pointed out to him, and he presented himself at the door. "Welcome!" joyfully

* The "bonnet carré" is not the same as the "biretta" which has now, we believe, entirely taken its place in France. Those who have read the interesting "Inner Life of Père Lacordaire," will no doubt remember the incessant war which he waged against this certainly not too ornamental cap during his stay at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice.—Trans.

exclaimed the old man, "I have only a little bread and water to give you, and a little straw for your bed; had I anything better, I would gladly offer it you; but, at any rate, I will willingly share with you the little which I have." Never was an offer more willingly made, nor more thankfully received. The servant of God was filled with joy, to see himself in an out-of-the-way place, which recalled so well to his mind the stable of Bethlehem. The old man, however, earnestly regarded him, and at last recognised in his new guest, the son of M. Grignon de la Bacheleraie. The next day, the news soon spread through the village; and then every one hastened to the relief of the holy priest. Amongst other things, a blanket, mattress, sheets, and pillow-case, were brought to him; but, instead of making use of them, he gave them away to a poor man in the neighbourhood, observing that such conveniences "were not suitable to a wretched man like himself, but only to the true poor of Jesus Christ." Those who had previously refused him, now testified their sorrow. His poor nurse, especially, was inconsolable; she threw herself at his feet, shed a torrent of tears, asked a thousand pardons, and begged of him not to refuse to come and take at least a meal in her house. He consented, and, as the poor woman, full of joy, was putting herself to great trouble concerning him, he said to her, less by way of reproach, than to enlighten her charity, "Andrée, Andrée, you have taken great care of me; but you have not been charitable. Forget Montfort, he is nothing. Think of Jesus Christ, He is everything; and it is He, whom you must always regard in the poor."

CHAPTER III.

FROM MONTFORT'S RETURN TO HIS DIOCESE IN 1706, TO HIS RETIREMENT INTO SOLITUDE AT SAINT-LAZARE IN 1707.

Montfort could not remain idle. As several priests of his diocese were at that time beginning a mission in the town of Dinan, he offered them his services, and they were accepted. The esteem he always had for the office of catechist, had been greatly increased, ever since the Sovereign Pontiff had especially confided it to his care; he charged himself with this office, in preference to any other, during the mission of Dinan. He could never anywhere do any kind of work without speaking of Mary, or without leaving behind him some memorial of his devotion to her. In the present case, it was a large and beautiful picture of the Mother of God, before which it was his wish that the people should assemble to recite the rosary, and burn wax candles continually in her honour. But a more important foundation, and one which still exists at Dinan, is the hospital to which his charity gave birth. One evening, having found a poor man, so covered with ulcers that no one dared to approach him, he took him on his shoulders, and carried him to the house of the missionaries. The door was shut; he cried out to them to *open it for Jesus Christ*; and going straight to his own room, he placed the sick man in his own bed, and himself passed the night in prayer. Many other poor persons experienced the effects of his charity, and it seemed almost a miracle, that with no other help but that of Provi-

dence, he should be able to support so great a number. His example and words communicated his spirit to several pious persons, but no one entered so entirely into his views, as the Count and Countess de la Garaye,* who had him to live with them for some little time. After having turned their castle into a hospital, they there themselves served the poor for more than thirty years.

At the close of the mission of Dinan, the holy priest obtained the necessary powers to give another mission to the soldiers who were in garrison in the town; its success was complete. He very soon knew how to gain their affection by prepossessing them in his favour by his charity, and how to touch their hearts by the power of his sermons. They were melted into tears whilst he preached, and after he had finished, they came in crowds to the tribunal of penance. From Dinan, Montfort went to give another mission at Bécherel. He had made up his mind thus to pursue his labours in his own diocese, when M. Leudiger, superior of the missionaries of Saint-Brieuc, invited him to come and assist him. He yielded to his request, with the consent of his bishop, and laboured until the middle of September, in the parishes of Baulon, Le Verger, and Merdrignac, of the diocese of Saint-Malo; and at Plumieux, and in other parishes of the diocese of Saint-Brieuc. But it was, above all, at La Chèze, Saint-Brieuc, and Moncontour, that he gave even more remarkable proofs of his zeal.

There was at La Chèze a large chapel, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the name of our Lady of Pity. Totally abandoned for many

* A beautiful little sketch of the Count and Countess de la Garaye has been recently published in "Good Deeds."

centuries, it had even no roof, and the interior was filled with briars and nettles. The great apostle of Brittany, St. Vincent Ferrer, in the course of his missions, had seen it in this state, and, preaching one day to the people, after having expressed his desire of restoring it, he assured them, that *this great undertaking was reserved, by God, for a man whom the Almighty would cause to be born in the latter times, a man who would remain unknown, a man who would be much contradicted, and laughed at, but a man, nevertheless, who would bring this holy enterprise to a happy issue.* Whether Montfort, from the first, was aware or not, of this prophecy, his zeal for the house of God, and his devotion to Mary, did not allow him to look upon these ruins with indifference. He undertook to restore them, and he succeeded marvellously. After having solidly rebuilt the walls, restored the roof, the pavement, the doors, and the window glass, he busied himself about decorating the interior. He erected a high altar in the Roman style, surrounded by eight statues of the size of nature, and by a very rich balustrade. Upon the altar was a beautiful cross, surrounded by gilt rays, and at the foot of the cross a statue of our Lady of Pity. All these works not only required workmen of every kind, but also involved considerable expense. He took the whole charge upon himself, made all the purchases, and satisfied every one. Money came into his hands in the nick of time, whenever he was in need of it. The work was pushed forward with such activity, that everything was completed at the close of the mission of Plumieux, which followed immediately upon that of La Chèze. It was Montfort's wish to consecrate, by a solemn ceremony, the memory of this restoration. For nine consecutive days he prepared the people for the festival, by causing

every evening a great bonfire to be lit. On the ninth day, he carried, with all possible splendour, the statue of our Lady of Pity to its appointed place in the chapel. The procession took place in admirable order. The people walked five abreast, with the rosary in their hands. The silence was only interrupted from time to time by the joyous singing of hymns. In the midst of an immense crowd, not the least disorder was apparent in the ranks, but, on the contrary, great recollection and modesty. "It seemed," we are told, "as if the angels had come down from heaven to arrange such beautiful order." From that time, this chapel, which was afterwards made the parish church, became an object of devotion to the people. They came from all parts to pray in it, and the pilgrims made the round of the altar upon their knees, with a cross between their arms, or upon their shoulders, according to the custom which the holy missionary had established. This practice is still in existence. To him also is to be ascribed the custom, which is still partly observed, of daily reciting a chaplet in the morning, another in the afternoon, and a third in the evening, whilst meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the rosary. Perhaps it was at this period, and with this intention, that he composed the prayers in memory, and in honour of these mysteries, which are to be found in the book called, "La Solide Devotion," and in other devotional books everywhere in circulation. The altar of the chapel of La Chèze, and the cross with the gilt rays, no longer exist, but the statue of our Lady of Pity is still preserved with veneration in the centre of the principal altar, and the memory of Montfort is always associated with it in the pious remembrance of the people. Respect is also still shown to a little room, which, it is said, he inhabited in the Château de la Grange, near la

Chèze, and where a stone is still shown under the name of Father Montfort's *pillow*. Strangers come to visit it, and have been seen to carry away, out of devotion, small pieces of the wood work of the chimney.

Amongst the benefits which the holy priest bestowed upon the parish of La Chèze, must be reckoned the suppression of a fair held previously to that time on Ascension Day. His zeal met with opponents, but God seemed to take upon Himself the charge of silencing them. One man, amongst others, who had persisted in selling a cow on the day of the feast, lost the whole price which he had received for it on the very same day. The purchaser, on his side, was punished before many days were over, by seeing the animal die, together with several others. He himself became paralysed in all his limbs, and was only healed on asking pardon of the holy missionary. The collector of the octroi, for having spoken ill of this reform, met with a similar fate, and was only cured by the same remedy. Many other facts, less sad, but no less marvellous, gave proof, at the same time, of Montfort's power with God. More than once he multiplied bread to feed his dear poor. A great number of sick persons were healed, and, amongst others, a daughter of Madame de Villethébault, who for a long time had been subject to epilepsy. He assured her that she would never suffer again from anything of the kind, and the result confirmed the prediction.

From La Chèze, Montfort, ever under the guidance of obedience, set out for Saint-Brieuc, in order to give a retreat to the Daughters of the Cross. He did there, what he had done elsewhere. He presented himself at the door of the community, like a poor beggar, and the portress, who

did not know him, refused him even a peice of bread. Having afterwards been recognised, and introduced into the house, and finding the dinner, which awaited him, too well served, he took occasion to give a lesson to the sisters. "You refuse," he said to them, "a morsel of bread, when you are asked for it in the name of Jesus Christ, and you prepare a repast for a wretched sinner. This is to be wanting altogether both in faith and charity." Such was the introduction of the apostolic man. If calculated somewhat to humble these good nuns, and to prejudice them against the preacher, they soon understood better, and agreed to treat him with unreserved esteem.

During the stay of the holy missionary for nearly three months at Saint-Brieuc, he took incredible trouble in the discharge of his holy ministry, and in providing relief for the poor. It was difficult to understand how he could be equal to so much labour, and yet he knew how to find time for prayer. It is true that he took it from the night, and he was often found in lonely places, sometimes upon dunghills, quite absorbed in profound contemplation. The day dawned too soon, to please this new Anthony, and once, when pressed to shorten his prayer in order to hear the confessions of some persons who were waiting for him, he said, "Leave me alone, what good shall I be to others, if I am no good to myself?" Words, worthy to be engraved on the kneeling-desk of all those who give themselves to the holy ministry! To prayer he united the most rigorous penance, in order to draw down the blessing of heaven upon his labours. Is it astonishing, after that, that they should have produced so much fruit in the souls of men? We will only give one example. Two young ladies had such an aversion for the religious state, that they would not even visit those

of their friends who had embraced it, for fear that in seeing them, they might feel an inclination to imitate them. One day, when they had gone to hear Montfort preach, the latter, without the least knowledge of them, recommended them to the prayers of the congregation, with the assurance that they would become the *conquest of Jesus and of Mary*. And, indeed, not long afterwards, they both entered the Ursuline convent, and there made their profession. The private conversations of the man of God were hardly less efficacious than his sermons. Twenty years afterwards, the Daughters of the Cross, attested in an authentic document, that they still preserved the precious memory of the advice he had given them. Other religious communities of Saint-Brieuc, especially that of the Ursulines, which he described as a house "most agreeable to Jesus and to Mary," profited in like manner by the instructions of the holy priest. It was he who encouraged the establishment of the Ursulines at Quintin, by announcing to them, that they would meet with many contradictions, as indeed was proved by the result.

At last, it lay in his power to rejoin the other missionaries, and commence with them the mission of Moncontour. He arrived there on a Sunday, and found in the public square a great number of persons, who were dancing to the sound of instruments. His zeal for the sanctification of the Lord's day, was inflamed at the sight of this disorder. He pierced through the crowd, seized the instruments from the players, and, falling on his knees in the midst of the dance, he cried, "Let all who are on God's side do as I do; let them prostrate themselves upon the ground, to repair the outrage done to His Divine Majesty!" In an instant, struck by religious fear, they all threw themselves upon their knees, and asked for mercy.

After this he went to look for the "Maire," persuaded him to profit by the good dispositions of the people, and to take suitable measures for the suppression of the disorder. A similar course of action cannot, indeed, be proposed as a model, but how can we condemn it, when we see thus reformed in an instant, an abuse against which, all the efforts of good men had for many years been directed in vain? Extraordinary sanctity is all powerful, and God was pleased to prove, by the success of even the strangest proceedings of the holy missionary, that He Himself had inspired them.

These reflections equally apply to what was done, a few days afterwards, by the servant of God, in the church of the hospital. At the end of his mass, he showed the crucifix, which had been indulgenced by the Pope, to the congregation, and told them that all might come up and kiss it, with the exception of those, whose attire savoured too much of the vanity of the world. He caused much surprise by refusing this favour even to the ladies who had charge of the hospital, although they were most modestly dressed; but he gave as his reason for this, that they were bringing up some young ladies, entrusted to their care, with a taste for vain and worldly attire. Some ecclesiastics, who were very ill-disposed towards him, happened to be present in the church; they came nearer to assure themselves of the fact, and to amuse themselves at his expense; but they had no sooner heard a few of the words of fire, with which the holy priest accompanied this ceremony, than, marvellously changed, they could themselves hardly restrain their tears.

Another of Montfort's actions during this mission, although much less extraordinary, had for him the most painful consequences. M. Leuduger

had preached a touching sermon on devotion to the souls of purgatory. The whole audience was moved. Montfort thought this a favourable occasion to obtain for the faithful departed, a great number of masses, and, without further inquiry, set about making a collection for that intention. There were some, among the missionaries, who saw themselves, not without displeasure, eclipsed by the talents and success of a stranger. They appeared to be much shocked by this infraction of a rule, which they had made amongst themselves, of not asking for anything; and, without taking into account the good faith of their colleague, they condemned his conduct so severely, that M. Leuduger thought himself obliged to decline his further services. Some years afterwards, this worthy superior wishing to retire, wrote to Montfort to beg of him to take his place in the direction of the missions, but the servant of God was at that time otherwise engaged.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM MONTFORT'S RETIREMENT INTO SOLITUDE AT SAINT-LAZARE IN 1707, TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM HIS DIOCESE FOR GOOD IN 1708.

Montfort not having any longer to labour with the missionaries of Saint-Brieuc, returned to his own diocese about the middle of September, 1707, and that he might the better await his Lord's commands withdrew to his solitude of Saint-Lazare. This was a small dwelling which he had procured for himself in a priory of that name,

about half a league distant from the town of Montfort. The house was not then inhabited, and he had obtained leave to lodge there with Brother Mathurin, and another brother of the name of John, who had lately joined them. On entering this hermitage he had found the chapel attached to it in ruins, and he restored it. There was nothing wanting in the decorations of the altar. It was surmounted by an emblematic figure of the Holy Spirit, and by the Name of Jesus. A little lower, under the name of our Lady of Wisdom, was a statue of the Blessed Virgin, the same, according to all appearance, as is now preserved in the "hospice" of the town of Montfort. Beneath the feet of our Lady was a crescent, out of which sprang forth gold and silver rays. This devotional little chapel was for a long time much frequented. In the middle was a kneeling desk, to which was attached by an iron chain a rosary, the beads of which, an inch thick, were of some foreign wood. Some remains of it have been preserved to the present day. The pilgrims made use of it, out of respect to the man of God, who had himself used it.

In this place he renewed the vow which he had already made, to live only upon alms; and he soon had occasion to show with what rigour he meant to observe it. Knowing that he had to give a mission in the town of Montfort, his parents proposed to provide for his subsistence and for that of the missionaries whom he might bring with him; but the servant of God, who wished to owe everything to Providence, thanked them for their kind intention, but refused to accept anything from them, either for himself or for his fellow-labourers. His confidence was not deceived. The assistance which he every day received was so abundant, that out of the surplus he found means

to supply many poor people with food. Our Lord wished to make an exception in favour of a servant, who was so detached from every natural inclination, to the general rule, that "no man is a prophet in his own country." This mission was no less fruitful than all the others. One word of his mouth was enough to work miracles of conversion; sometimes even he had no need to speak.

A worthy member of a religious order, who was witness of the fact, relates that one day, having ascended the pulpit, Montfort suddenly drew out a large crucifix which he always carried with him, placed it so that it might be seen from the pulpit, and without saying anything, at once came down, wishing to make his audience understand that it was Jesus Crucified Who was preaching to them, and to Whom they had to listen. Then, in order to render the voice of this Divine Preacher still more efficacious, he took another crucifix, and presenting it to the faithful, exclaimed, "Behold your Saviour, are you not grieved for having offended Him?" Astonishing to relate, all hearts were suddenly penetrated with compunction, and the eyes of all present proclaimed what they felt by torrents of tears. Everyone awaited, with holy impatience, the approach of the missionary, who went through the whole church, presenting his crucifix to each person, to be adored and kissed. This silent mode of preaching drew forth more tears from the eyes, and more sobs from the hearts of all who witnessed it, and produced more conversions, than the most affecting sermon could have done. It is thus that God is pleased to confound the false wisdom of the world by the apparent folly of the cross. It is thus that He attaches the greatest graces to simple and lively

devotion, and is pleased to render His saints powerful in deed as well as in word.

It was Montfort's design to crown this mission by the erection of a Calvary, which, by recalling to the remembrance of his fellow-townsmen the graces which they had received, might serve to engrave still more upon their hearts, the love of a crucified God. They all entered into his pious project, and each of them considered it a happiness to contribute towards it according to his means. The man of God had chosen as the site for the erection of the cross a rising ground, from which it might be seen a long way off. From there to the chapel of the castle, which was not far off, he meant to build, at little distances, a number of small chapels, in which the chief circumstances of the passion were to be represented. The summit of the little hill had already been smoothed, and surrounded by trenches, when an order arrived from Duke de la Trémouille, the lord of Montfort, forbidding the undertaking. This was due to the intrigues of certain persons who were jealous of his success, and especially of the Jansenists, supported in this diocese by the bishop himself, who shared their errors. Nor did their hatred end here. They resolved to strike the holy priest in his own person. The bishop having come in the meanwhile to the town of Montfort, they took advantage of the occasion to represent the missionary to him under the blackest colours. He was sent for, and immediately presented himself. The prelate was at table, with a numerous company. Out of respect, Montfort remained at the doorway, holding his hat in his hand, and in the posture of an accused person. The bishop, after having severely rebuked him, forbade him henceforward to preach or hear confessions in his diocese. To so severe a sentence

the holy priest only replied by silence, and immediately withdrew. The triumph of envy was complete. But an instant afterwards, the Rector of Bréal, knowing nothing of what had happened, entered the room, and begged the prelate to allow Montfort to give a mission in his parish. The bishop, who perhaps regretted having acted so hastily, complied with his request without any difficulty. The humble missionary, informed of the change, returned, and begged his lordship to extend this favour to all the parishes to which he might be called. This was granted, and he thus recovered all the powers of which, but an instant before, he had been so cruelly deprived.

The mission of Bréal began about the Feast of All Saints in 1707. The apostolic man seemed to have become greater by humiliation. Never had his preaching been more powerful. Small and great, all experienced its efficacy; but the soldiers of the garrison seemed to have the advantage of the inhabitants. Of these the most fervent were formed by the holy missionary into a confraternity of the "*Soldiers of St. Michael*," to which he gave special rules. His zeal, during this mission nearly cost him his life. One evening, as he was returning to the presbytery, hearing loud cries proceeding from a house, he entered it. He there found a man ill-treating his wife. Montfort endeavoured to calm him, but in vain. The only answer the man gave was to seize a hatchet and to raise it above him. Montfort knelt down, and bent his head to receive the blow. But the arms of the madman suddenly stiffened, and let fall the hatchet without doing him any harm. When even this miracle had no effect upon the wretched man, the missionary predicted to him that in punishment of his hardness of heart he would die poor and miserable. "I knew this

man," says the Curé of Pipriac, "his name was Salmon; and Montfort's prediction concerning him was fulfilled to the letter. He lost all his property, which was somewhat considerable; he was seen during the last years of his life to beg his bread from door to door, and I have myself given him an alms several times; it is from my hands that he received the last sacraments, and I saw him myself expire upon a bed of straw, in a house where out of charity he had been allowed to lodge."

On his return to his solitude, after the mission of Bréal, Montfort did not remain idle. As soon as his outward occupations relaxed, the care of his own perfection took up all his attention. He consecrated days and nights to the practice of prayer and mortification. A stone is still shown with reverence, which served him, it is said, for a pillow. But even in his retirement, a great number of persons came to ask his assistance in their spiritual or corporal wants. Then too, from time to time, like another John the Baptist, he left his desert to preach penance to the people. More than once he was seen in the market-places or public squares of the town, preaching to so large a crowd that no church could contain it. At other times he went to the assistance of pastors who asked for the aid of his zeal. In a letter of the 17th of February, 1708, addressed to the Rector of Bréal, who had begged of him to come and preach the "forty hours" in his church, he excused himself on the ground that he had other engagements for those three days. He merely promised him to send Brother Mathurin on the Tuesday to recite the Rosary in public, to sing the hymns, and to take to him the little crosses of St. Michael, which he begged to distribute among the soldiers. "Even on the Sunday," he added, "you had better give notice for them to assemble on the

Tuesday, a plan which will serve not a little to draw them away from the excesses which are so frequent upon that day. Salute them all on my part, and tell them that I earnestly beg them to be faithful to their rules, particularly on Monday next, and that I will come and see them on one of the Sundays of Lent."

His last mission in the diocese of Saint-Malo was that of Romillé, about the month of August, 1708. Time had not in any way lessened the hatred of his enemies, or rather, his daily success had only increased their bitterness. Deceived on a former occasion, they determined to take better measures for the future. The bishop having returned to the town of Montfort, they renewed their complaints to him with so much artifice that the prelate, always involved in the heresy, which he only abjured several years afterwards, forbade the missionary to give any instructions except in the parish churches, not even in the chapel of Saint-Lazare. Although this restriction placed upon his zeal still left him many means of practising it, the man of God saw well that his enemies would not be content with this. He did not think it right to wait for a greater scandal, and he resolved to leave the diocese. Before leaving, he wished to provide a guardian for the image of the Blessed Virgin, which he had placed in the chapel of his hermitage, and this he did in a way which almost seemed inspired. At the end of a retreat which he had given to young women in his parish church, he led them in procession to the church of St. Nicholas, to honour our Lady of the Rosary. There, after a short and earnest exhortation, he asked which of them proposed to become guardian of our Lady of Wisdom at St. Lazare. As no one came forward he took a little turn round the church, and pointing with his

finger to one amongst them he said, "It is you, my daughter, who will be the guardian of our good mother at Saint-Lazare." This person, of the name of Guillemette Rouxel, of the parish of Talensac, belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis, and was at that time forty-nine years old. She afterwards declared that Montfort had not been previously acquainted with her, and that she had never spoken to him. Nevertheless, the very same instant, as if inspired in such a way that she could not resist, she set off for the chapel of Saint-Lazare, and took up her lodging in a little room near the gate. There she lived on alms to the age of sixty-eight, constantly employed in praying to God in this little chapel, and in opening the gate to those who came to honour the image of our Lady of Wisdom. This house was afterwards occupied by the Daughters of Providence, from Saumur, who probably only founded this establishment out of respect for Montfort, whose counsels had formerly been, as we have seen, so useful to their foundress.

CHAPTER V.

FROM MONTFORT'S LEAVING THE DIOCESE OF SAINT-MALO FOR GOOD IN 1708, TO THE ERECTION OF THE CALVARY OF PONT-CHATEAU, IN THE DIOCESE OF NANTES, IN 1709.

From his own diocese, in which he could no longer carry on his holy ministry with full liberty, Montfort passed into the neighbouring diocese of Nantes, where he had learnt his apprenticeship for the Apostolic life, and where he was probably sent for by one of the Vicars-General, M. Barin, a priest whose zeal was only equalled by his learning. He immediately joined Father Joubert, of the Company of Jesus, who was giving a mission at Saint-Similien, a parish of Nantes. Montfort's zeal, which soon distinguished him among the other missionaries, more than once placed his life in danger during the course of this mission. One evening some men of bad life fell upon him, and would have beaten him to death, had not the people dragged him out of their hands. They themselves, however, in their turn, nearly paid dearly for their crime; all the authority of the holy priest was required to arrest the vengeance of those who had come to his help. "My dear children," he said, "suffer them to go in peace, they are more to be pitied than you and I."

Another day while passing along the Cours Saint-Pierre, he heard a crowd of people uttering horrible blasphemies. A fight was going on between workmen and soldiers: he fell upon his knees, kissed the ground, and said an *Ave Maria*, then, rising up, he threw himself in the

midst of the combatants in order to separate them. The workmen, although the stronger, gave way. A few paces from where they had been fighting was a gaming table, which the zealous missionary at once saw to be the cause of the quarrel, and of a thousand other daily disorders. He seized it and broke it in pieces. At this sight the soldiers, to whom it belonged, threw themselves madly upon him, almost crushed him beneath the weight of their blows, pulled out his hair, tore his cloak in pieces, and threatened him with death, if he did not pay fifty francs for the table which he had broken. "Ah!" he replied, "I would willingly give fifty thousand gold livres, if I had them, and in addition, all the blood in my veins, to exterminate all games of hazard such as that." At this answer they seized him, and marched him off in front of them to prison. He walked along as if in some triumphal procession, rather than as a criminal led to justice. Holding his rosary in his hand, he recited it aloud, and his joy would have been complete, had he not been taken out of the hands of the soldiers before he was consigned to the prison. M. de Bastières, one of the priests who had laboured longest with him, went to see him on the next morning. "He appeared to me," he tells us, "so full of joy as to have almost lost all self-possession; I was alone in his room, and he took me by the hands and said: 'Eh, what think you, my dear friend, of yesterday?' I replied that it had been very humiliating for him, and very sad for me; and that I had suffered much in seeing him so shamefully treated. 'As for me,' he smilingly said, 'I never remember having felt so much joy in all my life; my satisfaction would have been complete, had I had the honour of being im-

prisoned.' He then began to sing a hymn about the cross."

Our Lord appeared to confirm His servant's mission by rewarding many of those who showed the most zeal in hearing him in a manner which seemed miraculous. We will give the following instance. A young lady of great candour, who was afterwards superioress of the hospital of Guérande, had gone early in the morning to Saint-Similien, to hear Montfort; she remained there so long without taking any food that in the afternoon she felt almost inclined to fall down from weakness. Without letting it appear, she went and sat down upon a stone outside the church. She had hardly done so, when a lady whom she did not know, of modest and venerable appearance, approached her, offered her a piece of bread, and then disappeared. The young lady afterwards declared that she had never tasted such delicious bread.

The mission of Saint-Similien was soon followed by that of Vallet, distant about five leagues from Nantes. The most remarkable event of this mission was the punishment of an unfortunate man, the only one in the parish who had refused to profit by it. On one of the last days of the mission, as the holy priest was exhorting the people to contrition, a frightful thunderstorm arose at the same moment, and seemed to come to his aid in impressing upon all hearts sentiments of salutary fear. The whole congregation was bathed in tears, and cried aloud for mercy. One man alone, he of whom we speak, kept quietly in his own house, scoffing no doubt within himself at the simplicity of the people; the lightning struck him and he was killed without having had an instant allowed him for repentance. The fruits of this mission were not, however, perfectly preserved, and the

rosary, which Montfort had established, was neglected little by little. Two years afterwards, as he was passing by the neighbourhood, the holy missionary was informed of this neglect, and resisted every request which was made to him to go to Vallet. "No, no," he replied, "I will not pass through Vallet, they have left off my rosary." This punishment produced its effect; the custom of saying the rosary was re-established, and it continued for many years afterwards.

Montfort had scarcely finished one mission when, without giving him any breathing-time, he was sent elsewhere to commence another. His health in consequence broke down at the mission of La Chevrolière. For fifteen days he was so ill as to be in danger of death. He did not for an instant discontinue his labours, and God blessed this zeal, which was stronger than death. The excess of fatigue cured him. This mission was given by order of his superiors, and against the will of the curé. Every kind of means was employed by the latter to counteract its good effects. He had recourse to the most shameful calumnies, but without success. He even went so far as to make, in the church itself, the most ridiculous remarks upon the holy missionary. Montfort listened to him upon his knees, and without saying a word. "After which," says M. Bastières, "he came down from the pulpit, made a profound inclination whilst passing before the curé, and after having found me out, said to me, 'Let us sing a *Te Deum*, my dear friend, to thank our good God for the charming cross which He has been pleased to send us; I cannot tell you how happy I am.' We both of us sang the *Te Deum* before the Blessed Sacrament, and he afterwards said to me, 'This mission is much opposed, but I hope it will be all the more fruitful for it.'

Before leaving this parish, he took me to say good-bye to the curé. He spoke to him with so much sweetness and charity that I was delighted, for he asked a thousand pardons for the pretended occasions on which he might have caused him pain. 'I assure you, sir,' he said, tenderly embracing him, 'that I will pray to our Lord for you during the whole of my life; I am under too great obligations to you ever to forget you; and I should consider myself very happy could I find an occasion to do you any service.' "

From La Chevrolière, his superiors sent him to give a mission at Vertou. At this place everything seemed to go on successfully, and any other but Montfort would have been delighted. "One day, however," M. Des Bastières relates, "he took me by the hand, after evening prayers, and led me into his room; I asked him what he desired, for he appeared to me to be so afflicted and pained that I thought some great misfortune had happened to him. He sighed so sadly as to strike cold into my heart, and said to me, 'My dear friend, how badly off we are in this place!' 'Not at all,' I answered, 'where could we be better off? We have everything we could wish for, and in abundance.' 'It is because we are too much at our ease,' he replied, 'that we are badly off; our mission will be without fruits, because it has not been founded nor does it rest upon the cross. We are here too much beloved, that is why I suffer. No cross, oh what a cross, what an affliction for me! I have been thinking of finishing this mission to-morrow; what do you think, my dear friend, should we not be better off in another parish, carrying the cross of Jesus Christ, our dear Master, than to be here suffering nothing?' I answered, 'You would do wrong, sir, to leave the work of God unfinished; if you have no

crosses here, that is not your fault; perhaps this is the first mission in which you have been without them.' He was kind enough to follow my opinion; we finished the mission of Vertou, which lasted a month, and God shed abroad upon the place His graces and blessings in abundance."

At the close of this mission the man of God caused a great fire to be lit in order publicly to throw into it many bad books which had been brought to him. Many persons did the same. A young lady of condition approached the fire, along with the others. She had no bad books to throw into it, but in place of books, under the eyes of her parents and of all the people, who were astonished at her sacrifice, she threw into the flames the ornaments to which, up to that time, she had been too much attached, and from that moment she renounced them for ever.

An event of this mission, more remarkable still, was the sudden cure of Brother Pierre, a young man who had lately joined the holy priest. He had been in bed for more than twelve days, and so ill that he spoke with difficulty, and could not change his position without the help of others. M. de Bastières, having one morning gone to see him, in company with Montfort, found him so ill, that he insisted upon the sacraments being administered to him. Without answering him, the servant of God asked the sick young man if he had faith. "Alas! my dear father," he replied, "I should like to have more than I have." "Will you obey me?" said Montfort. "With all my heart," replied the sick young man. Montfort then placed his hand upon his head, and said to him, "I command you to get up in an hour's time, and wait upon us at dinner." An hour afterwards, the brother got up, and served at table.

At the end of some weeks spent in the town of Nantes, in giving retreats and in other good works, Montfort was sent, about the beginning of Lent, to the parish of Cambon. His zeal was no less active nor efficacious than everywhere else. Many abuses were reformed. The church especially stood in need of repairs; the pavement, the walls, and indeed everything was in a sad state. One morning, after the sermon, the holy missionary said that he had something important to communicate in private to the men. The women having gone out, he addressed to the men a few words, the better to dispose them to enter into his views, and then proposed to them that each of them, according to his means, should contribute to the restoration of the church. All gladly accepted his proposal. "Well then, my dear children," he said, "place yourselves, eight of you upon each large tombstone, four of you upon each of those which are not so heavy, and two of you upon each stone of the pavement." In an instant everyone was at his post. He then told them to carry these stones in order into the cemetery, and in less than half-an-hour all the stones in the church had been carried away. The next day, the women having gone out as on the day before, he exhorted the men to return on the following day, with all that might be required to repair the church, workmen, tools, and materials. Everything was executed according to his desire, and with so much order and zeal that in a day and a half the whole work was finished. He then had the whole interior of the church rough-cast and whitewashed.

At the close of the mission of Cambon, Montfort again ran the risk of his life. Five wretched men, knowing that he had to go from there to Pontchâteau, determined to assassinate him on

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his journey; and in order not to miss him, each of them placed new flints upon their pistols. Happily, a person who had overheard something of their plot, hastened to give information. It was afterwards found out that these men had really set out on the road, and had waited for their victim from five o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock in the evening.

At Crossac, as at Cambon, the holy missionary showed his zeal for the seemliness of the house of God. Everyone without distinction claimed the right of interment in the church; in consequence of this right, of which the inhabitants were extremely jealous, the nave remained unpaved, and resembled more a cemetery than a church. It was evidently an abuse. But for a long time every imaginable means had been taken in vain to abolish it. The authority of the bishop, and the most touching exhortations had had no effect. At last an action had been brought against the inhabitants, and a decree of the Parliament of Rennes had been given in their favour, which confirmed them in their possession. Montfort appeared; he spoke upon the subject, and the minds of all were changed. The principal inhabitants met together, after leaving the church at the end of the sermon, and signed, in the name of the whole parish, an authentic renunciation of the abusive custom, and of the decree which had confirmed it.

CHAPTER VI.

ERECTION OF THE CALVARY OF PONTCHATEAU IN 1709 AND 1710.

The mission of Pontchâteau, distant about ten leagues from Nantes, is the most celebrated of all his missions, both for the magnificence of the Calvary which he erected there, and for the great humiliations which he had to undergo. This event deserves a detailed account. The holy priest was always in the habit of closing his missions with the erection of a cross destined to preserve in the minds of the people the remembrance of the missionary's words, the graces which they had received from God, and their own resolutions. But for a long time Montfort had conceived a still grander idea. The discovery of a site suitable for his purpose, and the holy dispositions of the inhabitants of Pontchâteau, determined him to attempt the undertaking. After having disclosed his plan to the priests who were labouring with him in the mission, and having obtained their approval, he spoke of it from the pulpit, and finding the faithful perfectly disposed, he asked them to meet him next day on the proposed site. This was a vast heath, about half a league from the city, near the high road to Vannes. The ground rises gently on every side, so as to form in the centre a hill which commands the whole country round about. Montfort proposed to construct on the summit another hillock, which, by its steeper elevation and more difficult pathways, might better represent the true Mount Calvary, and at the same time raise higher in the air the

triumphant sign of the salvation of the world. Having arrived with all the people at the centre of the heath, he began by tracing out, first of all, round the summit of the hill a vast circular enclosure, and then another still larger. Between these two lines was to be dug a broad deep trench, and the earth taken out of it was to be carried to the centre to form the artificial hillock. Montfort, to show an example, took a spade and dug the first sod. In an instant all arrayed themselves in order, and the work was begun on all points, with great enthusiasm.

The mission of Pontchâteau, however, was far advanced; it was therefore brought to a close before Montfort's great projected work had been scarcely roughly begun. But neither the missionary nor the faithful were disheartened by the length and difficulty of the work. They laboured at it every day for fifteen months, and each day with a zeal and activity which seemed almost marvellous. One might have often counted five or six hundred labourers, sometimes even thousands, for they came from a distance of several leagues to take their turn, and they were not only country people, workmen, and others accustomed to labour with their hands, but people of every rank, some of whom arrived in carriages. They all brought with them their provisions and implements. Amidst this multitude of men and women, children and old men, there was not the least confusion nor the least loss of time. Everything was done with as much order and quickness as if a great number of persons had been charged to direct and hurry on the work. Piety, which alone animated the labourers, seemed to double their strength. Even professed workmen confessed that they themselves could never have done as much, whatever payment might have been

given them. Silence was hardly ever interrupted, but by the recital of the Rosary, and the singing of hymns. Montfort had composed several expressly for the occasion. It was, as it were, a heavenly concert, which comforted the body, while it gave fresh courage to the soul. The holy missionary was the life of the whole enterprise, yet notwithstanding he continued to give missions at Landemont, Saint-Sauveur, La Boissière, La Renaudière, Mizillac, Herbignac, Camoël, Assérac, Saint-Donatien, La Moère, Bouguenais, and other parishes. But in the interval between these missions he did not fail to visit his labourers, and when in the neighbourhood of Pontchâteau, he even went every day, when free, to preside over the work and to take part in it. His presence inspired new ardour. A single word from him was for these good people a rich payment. Thus they thought themselves well paid for the fatigues of the day when, in the evening, by lamplight, he permitted them to look at the different statues with which the Calvary was to be embellished, in a cave where they had been provisionally placed.

At length, by their own good arms and perseverance, the work was nearly finished. If the trench was then, as we are assured, the same as at the present day, it must have been a thousand and seventy-six feet in circumference on the outside, thirty-six feet in mean breadth, and twelve feet in depth. There was only one entrance on the eastern side. At the present day, this is closed by a gate ten feet long, supported by four pillars. Beyond the trench was a first terrace, twenty-eight feet in breadth, then a wall which supported a second terrace, higher by three feet, and twenty-two feet broad. A second wall, three hundred and seventy feet in length, surrounded

the foot of the artificial hillock, and supported the earth. This hillock, in form of a sugar loaf, was forty feet high, and a hundred and seventy feet in circumference at its summit, which terminated in a platform. At first there was only one winding path-way to the summit. The platform was surrounded by a wall, five feet high, which supported a sort of balcony, with pillars at little distances. In the centre of this enclosure Montfort placed the cross of our Lord, with its face towards the east, on its right, the cross of the good thief, painted green, and on its left, that of the bad thief, painted black. That of our Lord was red, fifty feet high, and thick in proportion. The figure of Christ, which was in wood, and is still preserved, was five feet three inches high; the head was very much bent down. At the top of the cross was the emblem of the Holy Spirit, and at the foot were placed the statues of our Lady of Pity, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Magdalen.

Montfort had tried, by ingenious contrivances, to furnish the faithful with pious subjects for meditation. On one side of the entrance to the platform, he placed a figure of the brazen serpent, the sight of which had, of old time, cured the Israelites, and, on the other side, he placed an "Ecce homo." On the right and left of the first entrance into the Calvary, were two little gardens, fifteen feet square; one of which represented the garden of delights, in which the first man fell by sin; the other, the garden of sorrows, in which sin was expiated by the agony of the Second Adam. The great devotion which he bore to Mary, could not allow him to forget her in such a place as this. To the pillars which surmounted the wall, enclosing the platform, was attached an immense rosary, the beads of which were of enormous size, and, which hanging like a garland from pillar to pillar,

surrounded the whole summit of the hillock. Upon the lower terrace, he planted a hundred and fifty fir-trees, and, at little distances, fifteen cypresses, to mark the decades; so that, by making the round of the hill, and counting the trees, the whole rosary could be said. Moreover, on the upper terrace all along the wall which supported the foot of the hillock, he meant to construct fifteen chapels surrounded by little gardens, in order to represent the fifteen mysteries of the rosary. Three of these chapels were already built.

Men came from all parts to admire a work, which seemed to require the riches of a prince, and which piety alone had undertaken, and carried on up to this point. The Calvary could be seen at a distance of twelve leagues, and was a subject of just pride to the whole surrounding country. Montfort had received the authorization of the Bishop of Nantes to solemnly bless the cross; and, in order to give greater pomp and appropriateness to the ceremony, he had fixed on the fourteenth of September, the feast of the exaltation of the holy cross, as the day for the blessing. Four preachers were to preach at the same time at the four sides of the hill, so that all might hear the word of God. People from all parts were already preparing to come. The town of Pontchâteau, and the neighbouring villages, could hardly suffice for the great number of strangers attracted by the feast. Even Montfort's parents were present. The joy was universal and religion looked forward to a happy day. What, then, was the general consternation, when, at four o'clock in the evening, of the very eve of the ceremony, there arrived from the bishop, an express prohibition, to take any farther steps. Montfort immediately set out for Nantes, but he returned on the next morning without having obtained any result. The people,

notwithstanding, had all assembled at the Calvary, and, with the exception of the benediction, everything took place as had been decided; but their grief at this disappointment could hardly have been greater.

From Pontchâteau, Montfort had gone to commence a mission at Saint-Molf, but, on the fourth day, an order to discontinue his holy ministry in the diocese of Nantes, was handed to him on the part of the bishop, by one of those Jansenist priests, with whom, some years before, he had refused to labour, and who now seemed proud of this occasion of revenge. The good missionary did not allow the least complaint to escape his lips, and instantly obeyed, with as much tranquillity, as if he had to perform a most agreeable act. It has been elsewhere remarked, that this was not a question of real suspension, but simply a restriction of faculties, and that the certificate given two years afterwards, by the Bishop of Nantes, does not allow of any other supposition. Thus, Montfort did not cease to say mass, nor had he need of any canonical absolution before going to labour in the neighbouring dioceses. The wicked rage of the Jansenists was not satisfied. To them all means were good, if only they could reach their end. Letters were written on all sides, to high and low. They represented the holy missionary as an ambitious man, who drew after him thousands of persons, and the Calvary of Pontchâteau as a fortress surrounded by moats and subterranean passages, in which the enemy might fortify himself in the case of invasion. The matter was carried even to court, and, upon the representation of certain ill-instructed, or ill-intentioned persons, an express order was issued that the Calvary should be taken down. The commander of the district-militia was charged with its execution.

Four or five hundred labourers, of the neighbouring parishes, were ordered to repair to the Calvary with their implements. The object of their work had been concealed from them. When they saw that it was a question of pulling down the Calvary, their strength failed them; they fell on their knees, and, with tears in their eyes, made reparation to the holy cross for the outrage about to be done to it. The commander had even recourse to threats, but no progress was made for the first two days. At last, on the third day, he thought of an expedient which was successful. He ordered the cross to be sawed down. In an instant the good people, fearing that the figure of Christ might be broken in the fall, vied with one another as to who should detach it from the cross. Never had a more vivid representation been seen of what passed on Calvary, when the very Body of the Man-God was taken down from the cross. While some filled the office of Joseph and Nicodemus, the rest of the people fell upon their knees, and testified their grief by tears and sobs. The figures of the good and bad thief were also taken down. All these figures were placed in a house at Pontchâteau, where, four years later, Montfort himself went in search of them. The demolition, however, advanced but slowly. The same men, who had arms of iron, to construct the Calvary, had (so to speak) but arms of wool for its destruction. To the joyous singing of hymns had succeeded sighs and tears. At last, after three months labour, the hillock was nearly destroyed, and the trenches partly filled up, and there they stopped.

The destruction of the Calvary must have seemed to many others a just subject for sorrow and complaint, but Montfort looked only to God, and knew no other good than the accomplishment of His holy will. "God be blessed!" he calmly

said, at the first news of the proposed demolition; "God be blessed! I have not sought my own glory, but only that of God. I hope to receive the same reward as if I had succeeded." He then retired to the Jesuits at Nantes, to make a retreat of eight days. Father de Préfontaine, one of the directors, received him into the house, and did not even suspect from his appearance, that he had any cause of sorrow. Having afterwards heard of what had happened at Pontchâteau, he spoke about it to Montfort, who confirmed the intelligence, but without uttering the least complaint against those who had drawn down upon him the mortification. "What I had seen," says the father, "and what I had known of him, had caused me up to that time to regard him as a very good man; but this patience and submission to the Providence of God, on so delicate an occasion; the serenity, and even joy, which appeared upon his countenance, notwithstanding so crushing a blow, made me then look upon him as a saint, and inspired me with feelings of respect and veneration for his virtue, which I have always since preserved, and shall preserve until my death."

The tradition of the place relates that the holy priest, upon seeing the demolition of his calvary, foretold that it would be twice re-erected. To show the accomplishment of this prophecy, and the finger of God in His servant's work, we will follow the history of this celebrated Calvary, down to our own time. The earth of the little hill had, with time, so sunk down into the trenches, that thirty-seven years later, it was not more than ten feet high. At this period, M. Audubon, the second successor of Montfort, came, with a few priests of his congregation, to give a new mission at Pontchâteau. He found there the memory of the holy priest in benediction, and thought it a favourable

occasion to re-erect his calvary. His project was eagerly adopted, and put into execution with indefatigable zeal. The work was encouraged by Mgr. Louis de Bourbon, Duc de Penthièvre, and admiral of France, who was good enough himself to lay the first stone, on the third of July, 1747. He gave 600 francs, to assist in building at the foot of the hill a chapel and holy sepulchre. The three crosses were replaced; to those of the two thieves the old figures were attached, which the Bishop of Nantes had, for this purpose, sent back to Pontchâteau, together with that of the Magdalen; it was not known what had become of the figures of our Lady and St. John. That of our Lord had been taken to the house of the successors of the holy missionary, at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre. M. Audubon caused another figure to be carved for the new cross.

All these works were already far advanced, when fresh opposition arose. M. Audubon hastened to bless the new Calvary, almost in secret, and here the matter ended. The crosses of the two thieves fell down about 1764, and the chief cross, which for several years had been bent down, fell in its turn in 1774. The figures were placed in the chapel, and the Calvary remained without a cross, until 1785. Then, on occasion of a mission, three new ones were erected. They were still in existence, when, in 1793, some of the revolutionits, mad with rage at the homage of which this Calvary was the object, met there one night, knocked down the crosses, set fire to the chapel, and destroyed whatever they could. In 1803 some pious persons erected three modest crosses on the summit of the Calvary; but, after all, it was little better than a heap of ruins, the sight of which was painful to behold. At last, M. Gouray, at that time curé of Pontchâteau, having, after many

attempts, obtained an authorization to restore these ruins, commenced the work on the 5th of February, 1821. The princes, who then reigned in France, gave, at the request of Admiral Halgan, a proof of their interest in this pious undertaking. Their example was followed, and from this time up to 1838, the offerings amounted to more than 21,000 francs. This large sum, however, would have been insufficient for the expenses, had not many other gifts been made in wood, stone, and other materials. Then, again, the old eagerness of all the neighbouring populations to aid with their own hands in the restoration of the Calvary, was renewed. There was the same zeal, the same piety, the same order, as in Montfort's time. Twenty-one thousand nine hundred and fifty-three persons gave each a day's work without payment, from the fifth of February, 1821, to the 23rd of November, of the same year, the day on which the new Calvary was solemnly blessed by Monseigneur the Bishop of Nantes. In spite of the rain, more than ten thousand persons had assembled for this devout and splendid ceremony.

It has been said above, that in the restoration of the Calvary, the plans and dimensions which Montfort had given were adhered to; at the present day, however, there is in front of the single entrance to the Calvary a beautiful chapel, forty-five feet in length, with a belfry, surmounted by a spire. Before the large door of this chapel, a statue of the holy missionary has been placed upon a high pedestal. Upon the terraces, in place of the fir-trees and cypresses, two rows of elms have been planted, and in place of the chapels of the rosary, fourteen shrines, five feet high, have been constructed upon the wall which encircles the foot of the hill, in which are represented the Stations of the Way of the Cross. Two flights of sixty-

three steps, rising from each side of the chapel, lead to the top of the hillock. Of all the old statues, the only one which still exists, that of our Lord, was restored to its original destination; but it was afterwards taken down, and enclosed in the chapel, for its better preservation.

The memory of Montfort is so dear, and his reputation of holiness so great, in all the country round about Pontchâteau, that his Calvary, even when in ruins, never ceased to be a place of meeting for the pious. But when the excesses of the French revolution had awakened the religion of the faithful, and had made them feel more keenly the want of prayer, it was then, more than ever, that they were seen coming from a distance of several leagues to offer their prayers at the Calvary of the servant of God. This pious custom has never ceased since that disastrous time, and the restoration of the Calvary has only made it more general. Several grand ceremonies have taken place there, and have all been marked by a wonderful concourse of the faithful. When, for example, the translation of a particle of the true cross, took place on the 8th of September, 1825, fifteen or eighteen thousand persons were seen pressing round the Calvary. Joined with the clergy were to be seen the civil and military authorities of the district. Each parish was distinguished by its banner. Two thousand seven hundred women, ranged upon the terraces, surrounded the hill with their white standards, while on its summit, the men grouped around the cross, displayed twelve hundred red standards: a glorious reparation brought about by the Providence of God to the Cross, and to His Apostle. Indeed this was not the only way in which God was pleased to reveal, in this place, the glory of His servant. It has been attested

upon evidence, juridically examined, and worthy of faith, that very many persons have there obtained by the intercession of Montfort, both signal graces and miraculous cures. The isolated position of the Calvary, does not allow of the truth of all these facts being established; but a most trustworthy witness has not hesitated to assert, that without exaggeration, their number exceeds two hundred.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM THE ERECTION OF THE CALVARY OF PONTCHATEAU IN 1710, TO MONTFORT'S FIRST LABOURS AT LA ROCHELLE IN 1711.

We have seen that after his humiliation at Pontchâteau and at Saint-Molf, Montfort had retired to Nantes, and had commenced by making a retreat of eight days, at the house of the Jesuits, his ordinary directors. He remained in this city, in the midst of his triumphant enemies, without thinking of quitting the diocese, until God, in His Providence, called him to another. Less occupied with exterior works of zeal, he knew how to turn this leisure time to the profit of his own soul, and gave every day a longer time to prayer. In order to have a share in the meritorious works of a great number of holy souls, and also to show his particular devotion towards the great preacher of the rosary, he desired to be admitted into the third order of penance, otherwise called the third order of St. Dominic, and he was professed, according to the ordinary forms, on the tenth of November, in the convent of the Dominicans, at Nantes. This care

of Montfort for his own sanctification, and the shackles placed upon the development of his zeal, did not prevent him from making himself useful, in more ways than one. A pious lady had given him a small house, which he made his ordinary residence, and which he called "La Providence," a name which it still preserves. He fitted up in it a little chapel, which he got approved by the authorities, in order that he might say mass there. Since his death, it has also been the custom to have mass celebrated in this chapel, and for a great number of the faithful to meet together there to recite the rosary. Before long, he found means to purchase another small house close to the former, to serve as a refuge for those of the incurable poor, who were not in a condition to beg their bread. In this way were laid the foundations of a "hospice," which, until then, had not existed in the town of Nantes. He also contributed very much, by his almost inspired counsels and encouraging words, to the erection of an establishment on the Place Bretagne, for the convalescents who left the Hôtel Dieu. Montfort also formed, under the title of the "Friends of the Cross," an association of pious persons, to which he gave rules full of wisdom. We will speak elsewhere of the admirable letter which he wrote some years afterwards to this association.

But, the most remarkable feature of the charity of the holy priest during his stay at Nantes, was his relief of a number of unfortunate persons, who owed their life to him. The Loire, having overflowed its banks to a greater extent than usual, had made its way into several quarters of the town. That of Pirmil, which extends from the Pont de Pirmil, to the Pont de la Madeleine, was so greatly submerged, that only the roofs of the houses could be seen. Many persons, for the

most part poor, having been surprised by the inundation, had only had time to escape the fury of the stream, by gaining the higher stories, but without any provisions. After having been saved from the water, they stood in danger of dying from hunger. Great pity was shown for their fate, but yet no one dared to assist them. It was no longer one stream which had to be crossed, but a hundred rapid torrents, carrying along violently in their course both trunks of trees and large blocks of ice. But nothing could frighten the man of God. He went through the town, and soon collected every kind of needful provisions. This was the easiest part of his work. He had then to persuade the boatmen to convey these provisions, but they all seemed little enough inclined to expose their lives to evident loss. Money could not tempt them, and, indeed, Montfort had none to offer them; but, speaking with the powerful voice of a prophet, and in burning accents of charity, he was the first to leap into a boat, and cried out, "No, you will not lose your lives; put your confidence in God, and follow me." Encouraged by these words, the boatmen followed him, and seemed no longer to have any fear under such a pilot. The boat of the missionary was the first to brave the danger, and ten others followed. The crowd which covered the bank, trembled, prayed, and wept. At last, the little fleet reached its destination. They let down through the highest windows, and even the chimneys, the provisions of which the poor sufferers stood so much in need; and then, with the same good fortune, the boats returned to the land, and were received with unanimous applause.

Montfort might justly have expected that by an act of such devotedness, his reputation would have been re-established at Nantes; and this hope

might have detained in the town any one less detached from all human glory. But, for several months, he had only been waiting for the order of Providence to go elsewhere, and exercise his zeal. As soon as he received it, he left. A bishop, of holy memory, Monseigneur de Champflour, who was acquainted with Montfort, sent for him to La Rochelle, and fortunately sufficiently appreciated his merit, to keep him always in the service of his diocese. He therefore left Nantes, towards the end of March, 1711; but, before going to La Rochelle, he had first of all to fulfil a promise which he had made the Curé of La Gamache, in the diocese of Luçon, to give a mission to his parishioners. God poured forth upon his labours the most abundant blessings. The whole parish was renewed. The holy priest erected a cross, a piece of which is still preserved, incrusted in another cross, erected on the same spot. He wished also to leave at La Gamache a memorial of his devotion to the Queen of Virgins. There was at the entrance of the little town, upon a rising ground, an ancient chapel, of good size, but quite deserted. He undertook to restore it, and to place in it a statue of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of our Lady of Victory. Having, for this purpose, obtained the consent of the Bishop of Luçon, and the inhabitants of La Gamache, he drew out a plan, and at once commenced the work: a beautiful stone altar was constructed. In place of a painting, he erected a canopy, the curtains of which were supported on both sides by angels. Under the centre of the canopy there was to be a niche of oval form, surrounded by a rosary, and from which flames and rays of gold were to be represented as springing forth, with the happiest effect. In the niche, upon a golden pedestal, he meant to place a statue of the Blessed Virgin, holding

her Divine Son in her arms, with the inscription, "Our Lady of Victory." As this work required time, and the holy missionary could not delay his departure, he left La Gamache, but promised to return on the following year, for the solemn benediction of the statue. He fixed for this ceremony the 12th of May, the feast of the Ascension of our Lord.

The interest which Montfort took in his pious foundations at Nantes, obliged him to return there before going to La Rochelle. He therefore went there to spend a few days, and left again towards the beginning of May. Upon his way lay the parish of Saint-Hilaire-de-Loulai, in the diocese of Luçon. The Curé had gone to see him during the mission at La Gamache, and charmed at the great good he was doing there, had begged of him to bestow the same favour upon his parish. The day was fixed, and the Curé had himself announced the mission, but, unfortunately, he was one of those men who are too easily deceived. An emissary of the enemies of the holy priest had paid a visit to him, and then, with the cunning of Satan, had succeeded in destroying his good opinion of Montfort. What was the surprise of the holy missionary, whom everything had led to expect the most friendly welcome, when, on his arrival, he saw himself received with nothing but abuse and reproaches. It was very late, and the holy traveller was extremely tired, and soaked with rain; and yet, for all that, he found himself obliged to seek elsewhere the relief of which he stood in need. Having, in like manner, been refused admittance at an inn, he went away, blessing God, and had made up his mind to remain the whole night in the open air, without any food, when a poor woman, seeing him pass by, asked him where he was going at so late an hour.

"My good friend," answered Montfort, "I am looking for some one who may be good enough to take me in this night for the love of God." "I am poor enough," replied the woman, "but I have still a little bread and some straw at your service; come in, I beg of you, with your companion." He passed the night very comfortably at her house, and went the next morning to say mass at Montaigu, in the church of the Dames de Fontevrault. These virtuous religious were so edified with his piety that they would not let him leave, without turning to profit the favour of his visit. There were few of them who did not desire his counsels. All of them were greatly consoled and encouraged in well-doing; they seemed to see in a mortal body, an angel sent by God for the good of their souls.

From there he pursued his way to La Rochelle. Passing through Luçon, he stopped to make a retreat at the Seminary, which was then under the direction of the Jesuits, who in all places and at all times were his friends. The latter, who knew him by reputation, received him with open arms as a friend, and, above all, as a saint. They did not fear to disclose to their seminarists the esteem which they had for him, and God seemed to be pleased to approve their opinion of him, by allowing some of the graces with which He had inundated so privileged and faithful a soul, to appear outwardly. Upon one occasion, amongst others, as he was celebrating Mass, the operation of grace within him was so strong that, after the consecration, he remained for nearly half an hour, as it were, in ecstasy. They were obliged to use some violence to recall him to himself.

After his retreat, he went to pass a few days with the Capuchin fathers, who were also desirous of the advantage of having the holy missionary

in their house; and it was there that he composed his beautiful hymn upon human respect. There were many reasons why he should pay his respects to the Bishop of Luçon, Mgr. François de Lescure. He therefore went, and was presented to the prelate by a dignitary of the chapter. The next day, which was the Fifth Sunday after Easter, the bishop made him preach in the cathedral, in his presence. The missionary, after having explained the Gospel, which on that day treats of prayer in general, turned his discourse to the prayer of the Rosary. It was a subject which he always treated in a masterly manner; Mgr. de Lescure was therefore fully satisfied. As, however, he was drawing a vivid picture of the excesses of the Albigenses in the time of St. Dominic, Montfort perceived two of the canons looking at one another, and pointing to the bishop; he was therefore afraid of having let fall some inconsiderate word, and opened his mind upon the subject, after the sermon, to the dignitary who had shown him so much kindness. The latter reassured him, but added that, doubtless, he would not have dwelt so strongly upon the evils caused to France by the Albigenses, had he known that the prelate was himself from Albi. Fearing that ill-intentioned persons might make mischief out of this innocent mistake, he counselled him to pay a visit to the bishop, and offered himself to conduct him. The missionary frankly related his embarrassment to Mgr. de Lescure, who received him most graciously. "M. de Montfort," he smilingly said, "from a bad stock there sometimes spring some good shoots." This frank conduct could not but increase the good opinion which the pious prelate had already formed of Montfort. If it had not been for his engagements with the Bishop of La Rochelle, he

would no doubt have tried to retain him in his diocese. And indeed, we shall see that a few months later he wrote to him, and pressed him to go and give a mission in Isle-Dieu, and in other parishes of his diocese.

The holy traveller left Luçon the next morning, and arrived the same day at La Rochelle, but so late that he had to sleep at an inn. He went to no great expense. All that he had to pay for himself and companion did not exceed twelve sous. And yet how was he to pay this modest sum when he had not even the very smallest coin about him? He left his stick in pledge, with the promise of soon redeeming it, and went straight to the hospital. It was there that his heart ever carried him. After having said Mass, he visited the sick, and spoke to them with his ordinary unction. A pious person, Mdle. Prévôt, who witnessed his acts of piety and charity, happened, as she was leaving the hospital, to meet one of the directors of the seminary, and could not help speaking to him with admiration of the strange priest whom she had seen. At her description of him, the latter, who had in former times been intimately acquainted with Montfort, and who doubtless expected his arrival, had no difficulty in recognising him. The account which he himself gave of the holy missionary made the pious lady desirous of offering him a lodging in her house. Transported with joy, she returned immediately to the hospital, and pressed the holy priest to come with his companion, and lodge in her house. We can easily imagine that Montfort was not long in recovering his stick. The very same day he paid a visit to the director of the seminary of whom we have just spoken, to thank him for the service which he had done him. The latter had no more pressing thought than to carry the news of the

missionary's arrival to the bishop, and he did so in terms well suited to confirm the favourable idea which the bishop had already formed with regard to him. This prelate, distinguished alike for zeal and deep spirituality, gave him, on the very first interview, the most significant proofs of a confidence which nothing could ever alter, and which settled the holy priest in the diocese of La Rochelle until his death.

BOOK IV.

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF MONTFORT'S LABOURS IN THE DIOCESE OF LA ROCHELLE IN 1711, TO HIS DEATH IN 1716.

CHAPTER I.

FROM MONTFORT'S ARRIVAL AT LA ROCHELLE IN 1711, TO HIS CROSSING OVER TO THE ISLAND OF ISLE-DIEU, IN 1712.

Before bringing Montfort forward in the presence of a large congregation, the Bishop of La Rochelle thought it better to make a trial of his strength by sending him first of all to labour in the country district of Houmeau, not very far from the town. The blessings which God showered upon these his first labours, and the example of virtue which he here gave, as everywhere else, removed all the prelate's fears, and he hastened to recall the apostolic man to La Rochelle, in order to give four different missions in succession. The first took place at the Hospital of St. Louis. The concourse was so great that the missionary was obliged to preach in the great court of the hospital. Commissioned immediately afterwards to give a special mission to men, and then another to women, he chose for this purpose the church of the Dominicans, on account of its size, but also no doubt out of affection for the religious of that order, to whom he was attached both by his connection with the Third Order of Penance, and his

particular devotion to St. Dominic. As La Rochelle, formerly the seat of Protestantism, still contained many heretics, it was the opinion of several persons that Montfort should treat during these missions of controversial subjects, and try to refute their errors. His ability for such a work was well known. But he himself, leaving this charge in the hands of others, preferred to have recourse to the means which had given greater success to St. Dominic, in combating the errors of the Albigenses, than could have ever been gained by the ablest controversy. He took care to give from time to time, between his instructions upon the great truths of religion, special instructions upon the Rosary, which, like leaven, were to communicate their virtue to all the rest. His confidence in Mary was not deceived. The most hardened heretics, as well as the most scandalous sinners, could not hear him without melting into tears. Often the preacher was obliged to interrupt his discourse to beg of his hearers to moderate their cries and sobs, which prevented them from hearing and himself from speaking. It was no mere passing emotion; at the end of his sermons they threw themselves upon the tribunals of penance, and priests, whether secular or religious, could not be found in sufficient numbers to hear their confessions.

Amongst all the conversions of Calvinists brought about by the ministry of the man of God, one especially made a great noise, and deserves to be mentioned. Madame de Mailly was by birth and qualities of mind one of the strongest supports of heresy. All that she had heard related of the sermons and virtues of the missionary made her desirous of seeing him, and one of her friends, a young Catholic lady, endeavoured to bring about a meeting. As there was need of great secresy,

in order not to excite the suspicions of the Calvinists, a meeting was arranged in a village near La Rochelle. The conversation turned entirely upon religion. The lady proposed her doubts, and was fully satisfied on every point. The clear and simple manner in which the missionary afterwards developed the Catholic truth ended in bringing light to her mind. But the sanctity breathed forth by Montfort's conversation and whole exterior made a greater impression than anything else upon this pure and upright soul. At the end of the first interview she was already almost entirely converted; she left the holy priest entreating him to continue to take charge of her soul, and to pray for her. Before long she consoled the Church by a solemn abjuration, the sincerity of which was afterwards proved by the constancy of her pious life. She in particular attributed her return to the faith to the devotion with which Montfort had inspired her for the Blessed Virgin, and to the hour of her death she testified every day her gratitude to Mary by the recitation of the Holy Rosary.

Not content with attacking vice from the pulpit, he pursued it everywhere. He often raised his voice against dancing. Upon one occasion, having learnt that a ball was to take place at a certain place, he went there, and throwing himself upon his knees in the midst of the assembly, recited aloud an Ave Maria. Nothing more was required to separate the dancers, so great was the respect felt for his virtue. More than once, accompanied by another priest, he penetrated into the haunts of debauchery; there also he threw himself upon his knees, recited the Ave Maria, and kissed the ground. This was generally enough to put to flight a part of the guilty company, when he immediately spoke to the others so firmly and yet

so gently that he obtained from them promises of conversion, which were often carried into effect. This zeal, of which several saints, and amongst others, St. Francis Regis, had given him the example, once nearly cost him his life. A man of bad life in his rage threw himself upon him, sword in hand, and threatened, if he did not quickly go out, to pierce him through the body. "Most willingly," replied Montfort, "I will die with joy, provided that you promise to be converted, for I desire a thousand times rather the salvation of your soul, than ten thousand lives like mine." The rage of the libertine was so disconcerted by these few words, that trembling in every limb, he could scarcely sheath his sword or find the door to go out. During the confusion all the rest had fled away with the exception of a poor girl, who had remained more dead than alive at Montfort's feet, like the woman of the Gospel, taken in adultery, at the feet of our Saviour. The holy priest and his companion took her with them, and placed her in safety in a house where she afterwards became a perfect model of penance.

The fourth mission which Montfort gave at La Rochelle was to the soldiers of the garrison; it was even more brilliantly successful than the preceding missions. These brave men, who had never trembled before the enemy, now trembled at the description of the judgments of God. They were heard to utter cries of sorrow, and were seen, in their great fear, waiting with impatience for the moment to throw themselves at the feet of the holy priest and confess their crimes. Nothing could have been more edifying than the military procession which closed the mission. At its head an officer, barefoot, carried the colours, decorated with a cross; he was followed by all the soldiers, also barefoot, who carried a crucifix in

one hand and a rosary in the other, and chanted the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin. At little distances the cantors intoned the words, "*Holy Virgin obtain for us*," and all the others, fixing their eyes upon their crucifixes, answered, "*The holy love of God.*" There was hardly a person who was not moved to tears by such a spectacle, so frank and sincere appeared the piety of all these brave soldiers. The change in their conduct seemed still more wonderful. The whole town wondered at it, and for a long time afterwards hardly anything else was spoken about but the edifying modesty of the soldiers. It is true that Montfort neglected nothing which could preserve amongst them the fruits of the mission; there was no care, no marks of affection, which he did not show them, and he was amply repaid. He could not go out into the street without being instantly surrounded by soldiers and officers.

Montfort closed his missions at La Rochelle by the erection of two crosses, one at the Porte Saint-Nicolas, and the other at the Porte Dauphine. The latter in particular was erected in the midst of a great concourse of people, and with extraordinary solemnity. The holy missionary stood at the foot of the cross, and was just beginning to speak, when on a sudden a thousand voices cried out, "A miracle, a miracle, we see crosses in the air!" These cries lasted at least a quarter of an hour. "Neither M. de Montfort nor I," says M. des Bastières, "perceived anything; but more than a hundred persons, both ecclesiastics and laymen, all of them worthy of belief, have certified to me since then that they saw a great number of crosses in the air." Although we could have wished that this fact had been related with fuller details, yet we can hardly doubt of its truth; for how can we suppose that

so many persons should have thus agreed together to confirm a lie, or that they should all at the same instant have become the sport of their imagination? Many other apparitions of the same kind, and in our own days that of the cross of Migné, make this fact still more worthy of belief.

These marvels, and the success of the ministry of the apostolic man, did not prevent him having at La Rochelle, as elsewhere, many enemies; or rather his very success raised up against him much jealousy on the part of libertines and heretics. All the ordinary means with which hell opposes those who wage war against it were here brought into play; songs, calumnies, insults, threats, and at last attempts at assassination. Every effort was made to ruin him in the good opinion of the bishop. The most specious pretexts and the most influential persons were alike put forward. But Mgr. de Champflour was not a man to be easily taken by surprise. However, in order to assure himself of the exact truth, and to be the better able to silence the calumny, he privately sent for three members of the chapter, who were the most distinguished for their learning and piety, and charged them to follow, without being observed, for a certain length of time, the whole of Montfort's private conduct, as well as the public exercises which he gave. They all made the same report, which was highly honourable to the missionary. From that time Mgr. de Champflour declared himself more boldly than ever his admirer and supporter. Moreover, the fervent prayers which the holy priest offered night and day for his persecutors were often heard. Several of them, touched by his sermons and example, changed their opinions with regard to him, and would have made him public reparation, had not his modesty prevented it.

But there are some men for whose rage there are neither remedies nor bounds. "One evening," says M. des Bastières, "as we were coming back from Saint-Louis, M. de Montfort wished to pay a visit to Sieur Adam, a sculptor, in order to look at some statues which he had ordered; he begged of me to accompany him, not knowing where he resided. The shortest way was to pass through the Rue de la Rochelle; when we had arrived there, M. de Montfort said to me that we had lost our way. I tried to persuade him of the contrary, but I could not succeed: he refused to pass through that street. We had to retrace our steps, and in order to avoid it, to go as far again as we had already come. After having left Sieur Adam's house I asked him why he had refused to pass through the street which was the shortest way to the sculptor's. 'I do not know,' he replied, 'but when we were in front of that street, my heart became cold as ice, and I could not take a step forward.' This mystery was explained to me a few years afterwards. I was returning from Nantes to La Rochelle, in company with several gentlemen belonging to different towns. The last night, at Poiré-sous-Velluire, seven leagues from La Rochelle, as we had to take the boat early in the morning down the river to Marans, several of these gentlemen did not go to bed, but retired after supper to a room upstairs. I myself was in another room below them, from which I easily heard all that they were saying. Their conversation turned upon M. de Montfort, and one of them related that at the time he was giving a mission at La Rochelle he and two of his friends had sought for a hundred occasions of meeting him by himself. 'We learnt one day by accident,' he added, 'that he was to go in the evening, with Brother Mathurin,

to the house of Adam the sculptor, and that he would pass through the Rue de La Rochelle. We went there at seven o'clock, and waited for him until eleven; but he never came.' One of the company asked him what he would have done, had M. de Montfort passed by. 'We would have broken his head.' 'And what would you have done with Brother Mathurin?' 'We would have sent him to the devil after his master.'"

This danger was not the only one to which Montfort was exposed during his missions at La Rochelle. The Calvinists, exasperated at seeing every day some of their number rescued from their heresy by the sermons of the holy missionary, thought it an easier matter to kill him than to answer him. They found the means one day of mixing some poison in the broth which he was to take after he had left the pulpit. Montfort immediately felt the effects, and although suitable remedies were instantly given him, he continued ever afterwards to suffer from them, and it can hardly be doubted that this circumstance considerably hastened his death. The state of weakness to which he was reduced did not, however, prevent him continuing his labours, and giving missions in other parishes of the diocese, up to about the month of February, 1712.

CHAPTER II.

FROM HIS CROSSING OVER TO THE ISLAND OF ISLE-DIEU IN 1712, TO HIS RETURN TO LA ROCHELLE.

All the accounts which the Bishop of Luçon received of the marvellous success of the missionary of La Rochelle, joined with what he had himself seen of him a few months before, determined him to call him again into his diocese. He wrote to him to beg of him to come, and recommended to him in particular the island of Isle-Dieu, as being the most destitute of spiritual help. Montfort immediately prepared to set out, and gave notice to those who were to accompany him to hold themselves ready. "We were," says M. des Bastières, "to embark at La Rochelle; the day of our departure was fixed, but we were warned that the Calvinists, who had been informed of our voyage, and who considered it a favourable occasion to get rid of the man of God, had sold us to their pirates of Guernsey, who infested the coast. M. de Montfort took no account of this warning; as for myself I paid great attention to it, and I represented to him as strongly as I could the extreme danger to which he would expose himself, as well as those who were to accompany him. He did everything he could to persuade me that this warning, far from having any foundation, had not even the appearance of truth. He told me that the enemies of God and of the salvation of souls had invented this trick to frighten us, and to prevent us going to the island in which we had been called to labour for the conversion of sinners. He added that if the martyrs

had been as cowardly as we were, they would never have gained the crown of glory which they now enjoyed in heaven. I replied that I had neither the courage of the martyrs nor his own, and that I should always congratulate myself for not having believed him at Cambon, in somewhat similar circumstances. 'You can embark,' I said to him, 'if you please, as for myself, I will not follow you, I will rejoin you in some other way.' Seeing me so resolute he yielded to my views. We put off our departure for a few days, and it was fortunate for us that we did so, for we learnt soon afterwards that the boat which was to have taken us, having started at two o'clock in the morning, had been taken the very same day by a pirate, who was very much surprised at not finding us on board. He asked the master of the boat where were the two priests whom he had to take over to Isle-Dieu. He was told that they had remained at La Rochelle. 'So much the worse for you,' he replied, 'I should have contented myself with taking them, and I should have let you go; but as you have not got them you must lose your vessel and all your merchandise.'

"We were advised to go to Sables-d'Olonne, and were assured that we should there find a small boat to take us across to Isle-Dieu. We adopted this course; but when we arrived there we found no one who would take us; for we were told that for the last fifteen days this island had been invested on all sides by pirates. We pushed on as far as Saint-Gilles, five leagues from Sables. There all the sailors told us the same thing, and refused in like manner to take us across, so that we were on the point of returning to La Rochelle. M. de Montfort was extremely disappointed, but as for me, my delight was indescribable. How-

ever, before leaving he made another attempt, and succeeded in discovering a master of a small boat, whom he so earnestly entreated, and to whom he made so many fine promises that we should not be captured, that at last the good man consented to take us across. We were therefore to embark on the next morning. When we were about three leagues out at sea, we perceived two pirate vessels of Guernsey coming down upon us full sail. The wind was contrary, and we could only use our oars. All the sailors cried out, 'We are taken, we are taken.' These poor men uttered pitiable cries, capable of softening the hardest heart. M. de Montfort, however, sang hymns with great spirit, and told us to sing with him; but as we felt more inclined to cry than to laugh, we all preserved a mournful silence. 'As you will not sing,' he then said, 'let us say our Rosary together.' We said it with him, as fervently as we could, and as soon as it was finished, M. de Montfort said to us all, 'Fear nothing, my dear friends, our good Mother the Holy Virgin has heard us, we are out of danger.' 'Ah!' exclaimed one of our sailors, 'how can we be out of danger? The enemy is upon us, and ready to sink our boat; let us prepare rather for a voyage to England.' And indeed the enemy's vessels were only a cannon's shot distant. 'Have faith, my dear friends,' replied M. de Montfort, 'the wind will change.' A moment afterwards the wind changed, and we saw the two hostile vessels tack about, and thus our boat was enabled to get away. We began to breathe again and to rejoice, and we sang the *Magnificat* in thanksgiving with all our heart."

The arrival of the missionary spread joy throughout the whole island. His courage in braving every danger in order to come and an-

nounce the word of salvation, and the marvellous protection of God during his perilous passage, caused him to be regarded by the inhabitants as an extraordinary man. The people and clergy came to receive him on the shore; but no one received him with greater joy than the venerable cure, M. Héron, who a few years afterwards died in the odour of sanctity. Such good dispositions announced a happy mission, and they were fulfilled. With the exception of the governor and a small number of his friends, all the inhabitants zealously profited by these days of salvation; and as long as the holy missionary remained on the island he had constantly occasion to admire, not only the pious eagerness of the inhabitants to receive the holy word, but also their perfect docility in following all his advice, and in particular what he told them with regard to the relief of the poor. In order to perpetuate the good fruits of the mission, he established the recital of the Rosary in three chapels on different points of the island. He also erected a cross upon a rising ground between the little town and the harbour This place was covered with stones, and one of these was so heavy that several men together were unable to move it. It is said that the missionary had only to place his hand upon it in order to roll it down like a little stone; it is still shown to strangers. At last, after a stay of two months, he left, leaving behind him in the island a reputation for sanctity which years have not been able to destroy. There is still shown, in our own day, on the door of a house, the monogram of our Lord, I. H. S., which is said to have been cut out by him, or at least by his order. Although other planks of the door have long since decayed, and have been renewed as many as three times, that which bears the sacred letters is still

preserved. It has been lately removed to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre.

Montfort did not forget the promise which he had made the preceding year to the inhabitants of La Garnache, to return on the 12th of May of that year to bless their chapel of our Lady of Victory. As there still remained a few days after the mission of Isle-Dieu before the time fixed for this benediction, he profited by it to go and visit and encourage his pious establishments at Nantes. On his arrival at La Garnache he had the consolation to find all the holy practices of the mission still in force, and he revived the fervour of the people still more by a few days' retreat, which he gave in preparation for the blessing of the chapel. On the day appointed the concourse was so great that the chapel not being nearly large enough to contain the multitude, he was obliged to preach in the open air. During the sermon there fell a heavy shower, and yet, out of respect to the word of God, the people, far from seeking shelter, would not even cover their heads. The saintly preacher had to threaten to remain silent if they persisted in remaining uncovered. He then blessed the chapel, and placed in it the holy image. From that time it has not ceased to be dear to the piety of the people; even at the present day pilgrimages are made to it from a distance; Mass is often said there, and a great number of persons have declared that they have obtained in it marvellous graces.

On the very evening of the day on which he had blessed the chapel of our Lady of Victory, Montfort opened a mission at Sallertaine. Never perhaps had his own words been more clearly verified, "That at the mere rumour of a mission the devils seemed to get the start of him in order to thwart him and bring about the failure of the

mission; but that in his turn, when he had once obtained a footing, he was stronger than they were, and that Jesus and Mary, and the Archangel St. Michael obliged them to yield the ground to him and to be silent, or at least to pursue their attack only at a distance." The Curé of Sallertaine had announced to his parishioners at the end of Vespers that he would take them in procession to meet the missionary, whom the inhabitants of La Garnache were, on their side, to conduct in procession for half of the distance. But the minds of the people were so badly disposed that he could only collect a handful of persons. The others kept away. As soon as the Curé had set out they locked the doors of the church, and left the keys in charge of a man on whom they could rely. The parishioners of La Garnache, however, who had followed the holy missionary in a body, wished to conduct him as far as Sallertaine. In the middle of the village was a cross; there Montfort stopped, and bade them a most affecting farewell. Their tears and grief at parting from their father, far from moving the inhabitants of Sallertaine, only excited their laughter and mockery. They affected to play the fool, and to hiss the missionary as he passed by; some of them had the boldness to throw stones at him. Every one waited to see what he would do, when he found the church closed. But to the great astonishment of all, as soon as he presented himself at the doors they opened of their own accord, without any one perceiving how it happened. After making some inquiries, Montfort went straight to the house of a rich inhabitant, who was one of those most opposed to the mission. He entered, and sprinkled with holy water the room in which all the members of the family were assembled; then, placing his crucifix and a statue of

the Blessed Virgin on the mantel-piece, he prostrated himself and began to pray. Then, getting up, he said to the astonished master of the house, "Well, sir, you think I have come here of myself; no, it is Jesus and Mary who have sent me: I am their ambassador. Will you not receive me in their name?" "Willingly," replied the master of the house, "and welcome." "Well then," said the missionary, "come with me to the church." In an instant he was followed by the whole family, and having gone to the church, he announced the opening of the mission.

On the next day, at the very first sermon, the church was filled, and from the tears which flowed from all eyes, the result of these holy exercises might have been foreseen. It was indeed most consoling. The evil was extreme, but the remedy was proportioned to it, and the appearance of Sallertaine was changed. The man of God arranged more than fifty lawsuits, and brought about more than a hundred reconciliations. He effected important restitutions, and conversions without number, some of which seemed almost miraculous. The holy life of the missionary filled the inhabitants with such admiration that they could refuse him nothing. He caused an ancient chapel, which had been abandoned, to be properly decorated, and with the authorization of the Bishop of Luçon, he dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of our Lady of Good Help. For a long time it was much frequented, and although it afterwards was reduced, owing to the misfortunes of the time, to be little better than a sort of storehouse to the church, the memory of Montfort's name remains still attached to it.

The holy priest also caused a fine Calvary, together with a sepulchre, chapel, statues, and other decorations, to be erected near the village.

Some weeks afterwards, it was destroyed almost by the same means and in the same way as that of Pontchâteau; but it was first blessed with great solemnity. One circumstance in particular deserves to be recorded, because it proves the admirable order which the holy missionary caused to be observed in all these ceremonies. The procession having been formed, he desired that the men should, out of respect, walk barefoot to the Calvary. He told them that everyone could leave his shoes in the place where he then stood, and promised them that they would all find them there on their return. He was instantly obeyed. Priests, gentlemen, and common people all took off their shoes, and, as the missionary had said, of all that multitude there was not one who did not find himself, on his return, at the place where he had left his shoes. The procession at the close of the mission was made with the same order, notwithstanding the rain which fell after they had started. This Montfort had foretold. "The day is fine," he had said, "the sky is clear; but before the procession is half way, we shall have heavy rain."

The zeal of the holy priest for the house of God had exposed him, a few days previously, to ill-treatment, which only served to show forth his meekness. A rich young lady, having behaved in a very reprehensible manner at church, had drawn upon herself a few words of reproach from the missionary. She returned home and communicated her resentment to her mother. The latter, more enraged than even her daughter, armed herself with a cane, and went to the public square, where she waited for Montfort to pass by. As soon as she perceived him, she angrily addressed him, threatened him with her cane, and following up her threats, struck him five or six times.

Montfort, who more than once had seen a man's sword pointed against him, was not much afraid at the rage of a woman. "Madame," he said, very coolly, "I have done my duty, your daughter should have done her's."

Immediately after the mission of Sallertaine, the indefatigable apostle went, on the 11th of June, to open that of Saint-Christophe. Although this little town was distant about three leagues, the inhabitants of Sallertaine, in order to make reparation for the bad reception they had given the holy missionary, were desirous of accompanying him the whole way. These marks of honour did not, however, prevent his receiving more than one insult on the road. A man, without any apparent motive, went so far as to strike him. He was arrested, but Montfort ordered him to be released, remarking at the same time that he would soon be one of his. And indeed it was not long before this man returned to a better state of mind, and became one of the numerous conquests of the mission of Saint-Christophe. Besides the ordinary marvels of grace which everywhere accompanied him, the missionary gave several proofs in this place of the prophetic spirit with which he was gifted. We will only relate three of the best authenticated facts.

A man named Tangaran had acquired considerable property, but by means which had given great scandal to the public. As he was desirous of sharing in the grace of the mission, Montfort, after serious examination, required him to burn, in the presence of witnesses, certain usurious contracts. The man consented, and the missionary having gone to his house on the appointed day, he was on the point of fulfilling his promise, when his wife came in, and notwithstanding the pressing solicitations of the holy priest, dissuaded

him from making the sacrifice. To bad reasons she added the most uncalled for raillery. "You are attached to the goods of earth," Montfort then said to them, "you despise those of heaven. Well then, your children will not prosper, they will have no offspring, and you yourselves will become poor; you will not even have enough to pay for your burial." "Oh!" replied the woman in a tone of mockery, "we shall always have thirty sous to pay for the tolling of the bell." "And I tell you," earnestly answered the missionary, "you will not be honoured by the sound of the bell at your burial." All this was fulfilled, point by point, as has been attested by the chief inhabitants of the parish. These people had two children, who married and died without offspring. Their father and mother left them nothing but debts, and both of them were deprived of the sound of the bell at their burial, having both been buried on Good Friday, a day on which the bells are never rung, the mother in 1730, and the father in 1738.

The following fact is no less attested. The servant of God having one day gone to the house of the sacristan, named Cantin, found his daughter busy baking. He asked her whether she was always faithful in offering her work to God, and as she frankly replied that sometimes she failed in this respect, he said to her, "Never fail to do this." In order to shew her an example, he knelt down, prayed, blessed the dough, and then went away. When the moment had come to place the dough in the oven, the mother told her daughter to form it into loaves, and to bring them to her. When the oven was almost filled, she asked if there were any more loaves. "You have not yet got to the end," replied her daughter, "there still remain as many or more than you

have put into the oven." The mother thought that her daughter had given her a playful answer; but what was her astonishment when she saw that there really still remained as much dough as would be enough to twice fill the oven, and yet the kneeding-trough could only contain flour enough for one baking.

There were great fears that the cross which had been erected at the close of the mission might be too weak to resist the force of the wind. "Never fear," said Montfort, as he ended his sermon at the erection of the cross, "never fear that this cross will fall. It will last until another mission be given in this parish. Then it will fall down to give place to another which will be erected on the same spot." And indeed the cross lasted until 1735, when the successors of Montfort came to give a second mission at Saint-Christophe. As they were deliberating where to place the new cross, because respect for Montfort's memory did not allow them to touch the old one, the latter was suddenly blown down by a whirlwind. Then they called to mind the prophecy of the missionary, and the new cross, as he had foretold, was erected in the place of the old one.

CHAPTER III.

FROM MONTFORT'S RETURN TO LA ROCHELLE, AFTER HIS LAST LABOURS IN THE DIOCESE OF LUÇON, IN 1712, TO HIS TAKING STEPS TO ESTABLISH A COMPANY OF MISSIONARIES IN 1713.

For about five months, Montfort, at the request of the Bishop of Luçon, had zealously laboured in his diocese, but without ceasing to consider himself as always attached to the diocese of La Rochelle, to which he now hastened to return. It was a great consolation for him to see that time had not destroyed the good effects of his missions.

In order to confirm in the path of virtue those who had already entered upon it, and to persuade those to enter who had hitherto refused, he gave a retreat at the Hospital-general, during which, although special instructions were given to those who belonged to the hospital, all the other exercises were public. At the first signal, the remembrance of his former missions brought together an almost innumerable crowd.

Of all the new conversions produced by this retreat, the most remarkable was that of a young lady named Bénigne Pagé, daughter of one of the Treasurers of France. She was endowed with that wit and frivolous grace by which the world is charmed. One day, she concerted with some officers and friends, to go and hear the good missionary with the purpose of distracting him, if it were possible, or of causing him to make some slip, of which they might take advantage, or, at least, of amusing themselves at his expense. Having, therefore, dressed herself in no very becoming

fashion, she placed herself immediately in front of the preacher. The holy priest perceived her on entering the pulpit; but he contented himself with a look of compassion, and having turned for an instant to the Blessed Sacrament, doubtless to recommend this poor blind soul to our Lord, he began his sermon. Before long, the whole congregation was in tears, and Mdlle. Pagé as well. But, what is still more wonderful, she did not confine herself to barren tears. When the sermon was over, she remained in the church. Her companions did their best to call her away, it was in vain. After having got rid of them, by making different excuses for stopping, she paid a visit to the holy missionary, with whom she had a conversation for two hours. On her return to her own house, without disclosing her plans to any one, she passed the night in arranging her affairs, and the very next morning, went to shut herself up for ever in the convent of the nuns of St. Clare. All the efforts of hell and of the world were powerless to remove her, and for more than thirty years she continued a perfect model of penance and religious fervour; her example was of great use to many other young persons.

The great good produced by Montfort's ministry at La Rochelle, created a desire that he should fix his residence in that town. A small house, in the Faubourg Saint-Eloi, was procured for him, which he continued to possess until his death. He accepted it, but only on the condition that no furniture but what was strictly necessary should be put into it. He called it his Hermitage of Saint-Eloi. Although this house, as far as it appears, has been almost entirely altered, tradition still marks it out amongst the other houses which surround it, as having been formerly the abode of the holy missionary. Near the chimney, which has been

preserved out of veneration to his memory, a little niche was fashioned in the wall, and of this a stone is still preserved, on which is carved, probably by Montfort's own hand, a Christ, surrounded by several other figures. It was to Saint-Eloi that our apostle loved to retire, in the intervals between his missions, to renew his soul, and to indemnify himself, in the quiet of prayer, for all the numberless cares in which his charity engaged him. From there, as from a new cœnaculum, he went out, when the time had come, full of heavenly fire and divine enthusiasm, in pursuit of new labours and new crosses. Thus he was seen, when the season favourable for the missions had arrived, to go forth and evangelise the parishes of Tairé, Saint-Vivien, Esmandes, Courson, and other places, in the diocese of La Rochelle. He was occupied in this work, almost without intermission, from the beginning of October to the end of May. Everywhere were seen, on his part, the same deeds of virtue, and on the part of the people, the same eagerness; everywhere God was pleased to multiply the miracles of His grace. We will only relate two circumstances of these missions.

The erection of the cross had attracted many strangers to Esmandes, but all had not come there for edification. Many persons had assembled in the house of a rich inn-keeper, named Morcant, who lived near the spot where the cross was to be erected. They had with them violins, and were preparing by intemperance and every kind of excess, to trouble the joy of the festival. Montfort had thought, through charitable advice, to have prevented this disorder. Having, however, been received by the strangers with nothing but jeers and blasphemies, he addressed himself to the master of the inn, and met with the same recep-

tion. The holy priest then threw himself upon his knees, and prayed; then, rising up, he said to the inn-keeper, "Go your way, unhappy man, you will perish miserably with all your family." The effect soon followed the threat. A few days after the mission, this man was suddenly seized with a trembling, for which medicine could find no remedy, and which continued as long as he lived, so that he was known by no other name than that of the "Trembler." He died in great misery. His wife had shared his fault; she also shared his punishment. As for their children, they all died young, with the exception of a daughter, who was a complete idiot, and who was taken care of by one of her relations, out of charity.

Never had the missionary found a parish in so deplorable a state as that of Courson, at the time of his arrival. The demon of discord reigned there as king. There was war between the pastor and his parishioners, and war amongst the parishioners themselves. Our angel of peace thought it necessary to add to his accustomed prayers and austerities, and to prepare the minds of the people, before speaking to them of reconciliation. At length, when he thought he had appeased the anger of God, and gained the confidence of men, he announced that he would preach on a certain day on a subject of great importance, and begged every one to come and hear him. He spoke upon the pardon of injuries, but with surprising power and extraordinary kindness. The audience was profoundly moved. The Curé, without waiting for the end of the sermon, publicly asked pardon of his parishioners for his scandalous conduct with regard to them. "And now!" exclaimed the preacher, at this moment, "behold your pastor, who desires to be reconciled with you, and

who asks your pardon; and you, my brethren, will you hesitate to grant it?" His hearers answered by a burst of sobs, and by cries of repentance. Then, at the first request of the missionary, all the men gave, one to another, the kiss of peace in proof of their own reconciliation; the women also did the same on their side, and, from that day, the most frightful discord was succeeded, throughout the whole parish, by a peace, the effects of which were seen by every one.

The happy success which God ceased not to bestow upon the ministry of His faithful servant, did not prevent his meeting everywhere with contradictions and crosses. A letter which he wrote during the mission of Esnandes, to his sister at Rembervilliers, on the first of January, 1713, proves that even then notwithstanding the protection of Monseigneur de Champflour, crosses were not wanting to him.

"God takes pleasure, my dear sister," he wrote, "in seeing our combats, and in making both of us victorious, you in secret, and your brother in public; for your combats take place in yourself, they are not seen out of your community; but mine are seen throughout the whole of France, whether in struggling with the devils of hell, or in making war against the world and the worldly enemies of all truth. You would, doubtless, be surprised, were you to know the details of the dear cross with which God has favoured me through the intercession of our good Mother. I pray you to thank my dear Jesus for this, and to beg of your community, whom I salute, to obtain for me, from Jesus Crucified, the strength to bear the hardest and the heaviest crosses, as if they were straws, and to resist, with a face of brass, the powers of hell."

We have also another letter to this same sister,

which he wrote from Paris, on the 15th of August of the same year; it begins with these words:

"Vive Jesus, vive la croix!" He then goes on to say: "If you were to know my crosses and humiliations in minute detail, I doubt whether you would desire so ardently to see me; for I am never in any place, without giving a portion of my cross to my best friends to carry, often in spite of myself, and in spite of them. No one can defend me, or dare to declare himself for me, without suffering by so doing, or without sometimes falling under the power of hell which I am combating, or of the world which I am opposing, or of the flesh which I am bringing into subjection. The swarm of sins and sinners which I attack, leaves me no rest. I am kept always on the *qui-vive*; I am always on thorns, and sharp flints; I am like a ball in a game of tennis; I am no sooner knocked to one side, than I am knocked to the other, and rudely struck. It is the fate of a poor sinner; it is thus that I have been without intermission and without rest for thirteen years, since I left Saint-Sulpice. Nevertheless, my dear sister, bless God for me; for I am content and happy in the midst of all my sufferings, and I do not think that there is anything in the world sweeter to me than a most bitter cross, when it is steeped in the blood of Jesus Crucified, and in the milk of His divine Mother. But, besides this interior joy, there is great profit in bearing crosses; I wish you could see mine; but I have never made more conversions than after some cruel and most unjust interdiction. Courage, my very dear sister, let us all three bear our cross to the two extremities of the kingdom: carry yours well; and I will endeavour to carry mine, by the grace of God, without complaining, without murmuring, without trying to get rid of it, without excusing ourselves,

even without shedding tears; for if we were to shed tears, we would be like little children, who should weep and complain were a hundred pounds in gold given them to carry, or like a labourer who should fall into despair, were his field to be covered with louis d'or, in order to make him richer."

The last mission given in these parts was that of La Séguinière, a parish not far from Chollet, and which at that time formed part of the diocese of La Rochelle. The man of God esteemed so highly the curé of this parish, whose name was Kantin, that he called him the "*curé according to his own heart.*" Although this worthy pastor was greatly consoled in seeing his parish in very good condition, he thought he could do it no greater service, than to call for the holy missionary; his words and example soon kindled in all hearts a new fervour, which spread from there, throughout the whole district, in which its precious results are still to be found. Frequent reception of the sacraments, and the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, were the means which Montfort employed to perpetuate and increase the fruits of his mission. The incredible labours to which he had given himself up, had so exhausted him, that he had much difficulty in finishing the exercises. Nevertheless, without yielding to the pressing requests which were made to him to take a few days rest, he eagerly profited by the vacation time of the missions to execute a project which had long occupied his mind.

CHAPTER IV.

MONTFORT TAKES THE FIRST STEPS TO ESTABLISH A COMPANY OF MISSIONARIES DURING THE VACATION OF 1713.

So many labours and such great success were but small matters to the man of God. He embraced centuries in his zeal, and, finding himself too straitened within the limits assigned to his own life, he aspired to render lasting, and to perperpetuate, all that he had done for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It was with this intention, that at the close of each mission, he was in the habit of setting on foot, according to circumstances, some memorial or institution calculated to preserve its fruits; such, for instance, as the erection of a calvary, the decoration of a chapel, or the formation of an association. He had already established several of these associations; as, for example, the Virgins, the Daughters of the Cross, the White Penitents, the Friends of the Cross, and the Soldiers of St. Michael. But all these institutions were merely local, and were with difficulty extended to other places, or maintained for any length of time. He now conceived the idea of forming two institutions of more general usefulness, which might serve to perpetuate all the others. One of these, the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom had already been commenced at the hospital of Poitiers, and at a later period we shall see the man of God giving to it its last perfection. The other was a Company of Priests, who should consecrate their lives, to carry on after his death, and according to his method, the fruit-

ful labour of the missions. He communicated his ideas upon this subject to the Bishop of La Rochelle, with the full determination to be guided in everything by his decision, and to give up the whole project, should he deem it advisable. The holy and learned prelate, having fully approved of the plan, and given it his earnest encouragement, Montfort redoubled his prayers and mortifications in order to unite himself more intimately with God, and profited by the intervals between the missions of this year, to reduce his plan into shape, and to put it upon paper. It is still preserved, written entirely in his own hand-writing. "The holy legislator," remarks Father Picot de Clorivière, "was content to draw out a simple sketch, and to note down the essential parts, to which the rest might afterwards be easily added, either by himself, or by his successors." The idea which he formed of his future company is noble and sublime. He requires of those who are to compose it, no ordinary perfection, such, indeed, as is rarely to be met with, not merely among the simple faithful, but even among religious and ecclesiastics; he desires to have true apostles, with their whole heart in their work, detached from every object, ready to fly, like a body of light troops, at the good pleasure of the bishops, wherever they may be called by the greater good of souls. Assured of their existence, which his prophetic eye foresaw beyond his grave, he spoke of them with enthusiasm, and addressed them, as if he already saw them filled with his spirit, practising their rule with fervour. His discourse to these missionaries will be given at the end of this work, together with a prayer which he placed at the head of this rule.

The general community, composed of priests, and lay-brothers, of which we shall afterwards

speak, was to be formed under the title of the "Holy Ghost," as appears from the terms of Montfort's will; but he wished that in this community there should be a special company of missionaries, who should bear the name of Mary. His intention was thus to place them solemnly under the all-powerful protection of the Queen of Heaven, and to impose upon them the sweet obligation of being, in a very special manner, devoted to her. This devotion had always been his, and he attributed to it the whole success of his ministry; he thought he could leave no better patrimony to those who should join his work, than the perpetuation of this devotion. But whence were to come his children? Like Moses, of old time, upon Mount Horeb, Montfort, in his hermitage of Saint-Eloi, had received of God the tables of a new law; but he had to look for those to whom he might communicate it. It was for this purpose, that, immediately after the mission at La Séguinière, he undertook a journey to Paris.

Arrived in the capital, in order to find suitable recruits for his Company of Mary, Montfort made application to the community of Saint-Esprit, which had been formed only a few years previously, by one who came from the same part of the country as himself, the Abbé Desplaces, and with whom he had been closely united in piety from his early school-days. He had formerly invited him to share his labours, but the latter, who at that time had begun to establish his seminary, did not consider it his duty to abandon a work, which so many prudent persons had approved of, and which God so evidently blessed. He told Montfort however, that he was working indirectly for him, and that when the time had come, he might choose amongst his students, those whom he considered most suitable for the missions. At the time of

this journey to Paris, the Abbé Desplaces had been dead about four years; thirty years had formed the whole life of this holy priest, whom all Paris regretted. He was succeeded by M. Bovic, one of his pupils. Montfort arrived at the seminary at the hour of recreation. Students and directors, all alike, gave a most honourable reception to one, with whom several of them were already personally acquainted, and whose former connection with M. Desplaces was well known to all. As for himself, after having saluted the company in general, he happened to remark one of the seminarists more poorly clad than the rest, and went straight to him and embraced him, with no other motive for this distinction, than his respect for the livery of poverty.

The rest of Montfort's conduct, during his stay in the community of Saint-Esprit, corresponded with so supernatural a commencement, and with the high idea which had been formed of his virtue. Thus, his example gave great weight to his heavenly words. The worthy successor of M. Desplaces never afterwards spoke of him except with admiration, and has been pleased to preserve some facts for our edification. "One day," he tells us, "he was speaking with some young seminarists of that divine wisdom, for which he had quite a special attraction, an attraction which he ardently desired to communicate to all whom he thought capable of receiving it. His discourse was a sort of paraphrase of Solomon's magnificent eulogium of wisdom. But, in describing this wisdom, he was careful to remark, that he was not speaking only of the wisdom which was given to Solomon, much less of the wisdom of this world, but of the wisdom which Jesus Christ has taught us by His example and His words; a wisdom which consists in being poor, mortified, hidden,

and, so to speak, in making oneself little in order to please God, in preferring at all times, and in everything, poverty to riches, crosses and sufferings to the sensual pleasures and satisfactions of this life; humiliations and contempt to the glory and greatness of the world. Wisdom so fair, that it alone deserves all our love; so delicious, that it abundantly repays us for all the sacrifices which we may make, and for all the sufferings which we may undergo in its acquisition; but wisdom unknown to the world, despised, persecuted by the world, and treated by it as extravagance and foolishness, because it cannot conceive that happiness and glory can ever be found in the midst of crosses and humiliations. After this exposition, he made us kneel down, and pray together to God for this wisdom which he had been describing; and his words were so full of fire, and his thoughts so sublime, that it seemed to us all as if an angel, and not a man, were speaking to us. On another occasion, he made an exhortation upon the detachment and the spirit of poverty, requisite for all those who embrace the ecclesiastical state, and who protest by so doing that they have no other heritage but God Himself. He dwelt at length upon the words of St. Peter to the lame man, who was sitting in the gate of the temple: "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk." "Imitate," he said, "the poverty of the apostles; despoil yourselves of everything, as they did; cling to nothing upon earth, then all things will be possible to you, because Jesus Christ will be in you, as He was in them. It may be that you will not, like them, work miracles in the order of nature, because they will not be necessary; but you will work miracles of grace; the hearts of men will be in your hands, and you will change

them at your pleasure." He often spoke of Mary, and, above all, of devotion to the holy rosary, in a way to inspire those who listened to him. He even did the same thing at recreation time, and once, especially, when he wished to show the efficacy of this kind of prayer, he let fall the following expression: "That no sinner had ever resisted him, when once he had placed his hand upon his collar and taken him prisoner with the rosary."

Montfort, whilst thus labouring to keep up the fervour of the students of the seminary of Saint-Esprit, did not lose sight of the object which had brought him to Paris. On his first arrival, he had opened the subject to the directors of the seminary, and had communicated to them his ideas with regard to the establishment of a company of missionaries. They all of them not only approved of his design, but renewed the promise made to him by their pious founder, of co-operating, as far as lay in their power, in this great work, by forming suitable subjects to perpetuate it. This was, as it were, their treaty of alliance and association. In consequence, the man of God wrote forthwith, at the head of his rule, the following words: "There is at Paris a seminary (that of Saint-Esprit) in which young ecclesiastics, who have a vocation for the missions of the Company of Mary, are prepared for it by learning and virtue." But this was not enough; in order to perpetuate the memory of this happy and holy association, he caused a small statue of the Blessed Virgin to be made in wood, about a foot and a half in length. Her mantle was raised at the sides, and discovered twelve small figures of priests, six on her right hand and six on her left. With their eyes fixed upon their good Mother, they seemed to congratulate one another on their admission into her company. The principal statue was preserved for a

long time in the seminary of Saint-Esprit, with special veneration. Even at that time, notwithstanding their small number, which hardly sufficed for the different employments of the house, the director would have been glad to give him a member of the community. They had even cast their eyes upon M. Caris, a holy priest, of whom it was truly said in his epitaph, "that he had ever lived for God and for his neighbour, never for himself." He was even upon the point of leaving, when the superior, unable to take the resolution of depriving the community of one of its most useful members, withdrew his consent. M. Caris, often afterwards testified his regret to those whom he saw leaving from time to time, in order to join the successors of Montfort. Of this number, amongst them were MM. Vatel, Thomas, Hédan, and Le Valois, whom the instructions of the holy missionary had inspired with the desire of one day following in his footsteps. M. Vatel was the only one who laboured with him; the others only joined his company after his death. But the way in which he himself at that time chose M. Vatel, deserves to be recorded. This young man, who had only been two years in the seminary, was a cause of great edification on account of his fervour and regularity. One day, when a great number of the other seminarists stood round the man of God, the latter rising up, asked them all, upon which of them he should cast his lot; then, turning slowly round, and looking earnestly at each of them, one after the other, as if he would read their eyes, he took off young La Vatel's hat, and, placing his own upon his head, said, "Upon him; he is good; he belongs to me; I shall have him." At the same instant, although he had previously had no such intention, the pious seminarist formed a resolution to join the missionary, and, although

he did not as yet communicate it to any one, his only thought now was how to put it into execution.

The alliance which he had made with the Congregation of the Holy Ghost was too great a consolation for Montfort not to be very soon accompanied, by way of compensation with proportionate humiliations sent to him by God. His stay at Paris procured for him a great number, and of more than one kind. On all sides, very nearly, he saw himself rejected, calumniated, laughed at. We have seen above the letter which he wrote on this occasion to his sister at Rembervilliers. Indeed, Providence could not have better carried out the desires of this great lover of the cross. It seemed as if he wished for no good that was unaccompanied by the cross, and besides, the cross was never an obstacle to his success. The object of his journey to Paris had not been to exercise the holy ministry; nevertheless he could not remain useless for several weeks. Besides the good which he did in the community of Saint-Esprit, he established the devotion of the Rosary in three other communities, and determined several persons, ecclesiastics and laymen, to recite the whole of it daily. The community known by the name of the Ave Maria profited in a special manner by the stay of the man of God. He gave a retreat there. The sisters had at first hesitated to ask this service of him, from fear that, accustomed to proclaim in the ears of sinners the thunder of eternal truths, and almost passionately zealous as he was for the practice of penance, he might preach to them only words full of fear, and counsels of perfection which might well make them despair. They were therefore delightfully surprised to hear him explain the mortifying maxims of the Gospel in all their

austerity, it is true, but with such wisdom of thought and unction of word as to recall to their minds our Lord Himself, calling upon all men to bear His light burden and easy yoke. They were so satisfied with him that, finding it impossible to make the holy priest accept of any other offering, they presented him with a vestment for Mass, which he might carry with him without trouble during his missions. He accepted it and made use of it for the rest of his life.

It was not only to the souls of men that Montfort was useful at Paris; the divine power which everywhere accompanied him extended even to their bodies. One day, as he was going out of the church after having said Mass, a poor woman, touched at the devotion which he had shown, came to him carrying a child whose head was all eaten by ringworm. She told him that she had employed every kind of remedy in vain, and prayed him, with tears in her eyes, to intercede for her child with God. "Do you believe," replied the holy man, "that the ministers of Jesus Christ have the power of healing, in the name of their Master, different kinds of sickness by the laying on of their hands?"* "Yes sir," answered the woman, "I do believe and am persuaded that if you ask of God the cure of my child, He will grant it you." At this moment Montfort, laying his hand upon the child's head, pronounced these words: "May the Lord heal thee, my child, and reward in thee thy mother's faith!" Immediately the ringworm dried up and fell off, and the child was perfectly healed.

* Surely this question of the servant of God ought to sink deeply into our hearts in these days of "little faith," and to remind us to stir up the grace which is in us by the "imposition of hands," and for which a special service has been given us by the Church, "De Visitatione et *Cura* Infirmorum."—*Trans.*

Almost immediately after this the missionary left Paris. He had been there nearly two months.

On returning to La Rochellè Montfort passed through Poitiers, and although he could only remain there a very short time, he had yet time enough to see, to his great consolation, that a large number of those whom he had begotten to Jesus Christ had remained faithful to the holy instructions which he had given them. But his greatest joy must have been to meet again, in all her fervour, that admirable Sœur Marie-Louise of Jesus, who, deprived for seven or eight years of the pleasure of seeing him, had not been on that account the less firm in continuing, alone in the midst of a thousand difficulties, both the habit and kind of life which he had prescribed for her. She was still housekeeper to the hospital. During this short stay at Poitiers he gave her a companion in the person of Mdlle. Brunet, who took the name of Sœur de la Conception. He had formerly been her director, and now his words took away all her uncertainty for ever.

CHAPTER V.

MONTFORT'S LABOURS FROM THE VACATION OF 1713 TO THAT OF 1714.

On the road to Poitiers lies the little town of Mauzé. Although exhausted by the fatigue of a long journey, Montfort, in passing through this parish, arranged with the curé to give a mission, the opening of which was fixed for the following Sunday. From there he pursued his way to La

Rochelle, where two Jesuits of the college, profiting by their vacation, begged of him to accept their services for the mission which he was about to give; one of them was the celebrated Père Colusson, professor of theology. The holy priest was delighted to have such fellow-labourers; and indeed they worked with admirable fervour, but they themselves took pleasure in recognising Montfort's incomparable zeal. Notwithstanding his exhaustion and weakness, he toiled so laboriously, without on that account relaxing in any way his ordinary austerities, that he was seized, towards the middle of the mission, with a cruel illness, which placed his life in the greatest danger. He alone was not alarmed; and to console his companions, he told them with a look of satisfaction and gratitude that every year, at that time, about the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, he was accustomed to receive from his good Master some portion of His Cross."

After the mission, the sick man was removed to the hospital of La Rochelle. This great lover of poverty showed, under these circumstances, the same sentiments which he had formerly experienced upon a similar occasion. It was for him a kind of triumph to find himself placed as a poor man in a house destined for the service of the poor, and his only trouble was to see himself the object of especial care. Neither the length of the illness, nor the heat of a continual fever, caused by a large abscess, nor the cruel operations which took place regularly every two days, for nearly two months, could ever alter the peace of his heart, or draw forth from his lips the least complaint. On the contrary, he ceased not to bless the fatherly goodness of God, "Who treated him," he said, "far more tenderly than he deserved, and Who wished him by this illness to

do some little penance, in order to purify him and render him conformable to Jesus Crucified." This sentiment, profoundly engraved upon his heart, filled him with a sweet joy which spread over his countenance, and showed itself in his speech. Many persons came to visit him in order to be edified. The physicians, little accustomed to such patience, were themselves filled with admiration at the sight of a man who, a prey to such great sufferings, could bear them with so much joy. They declared that they had never seen anything like it. "Out of a hundred similar cases," one of them remarked, "there would not have been a single recovery. When we probed the wound, which happened twice a day, he gave no sign of pain, he did not even groan. Far from uttering any complaint he encouraged us not to spare him, by assuring us that he would remember us in his prayers. He laughed with us as if he were enjoying some great pleasure, and when the probe touched the wound, he sang the hymn,

'Vive Jesus! vive sa croix!
N'est il pas bien juste qu'on l'aime?'"

At last, after having held His servant for two whole months, as it were between life and death, God restored to him by degrees his health, which men had despaired of ever seeing him recover. Montfort had been admirable during his illness; he was not less so during his convalescence, to many persons so dangerous a time. He seemed, as it were, to be wholly renewed in Jesus Christ, and more than ever filled with the desire to consecrate to his Master's glory the life which He had miraculously preserved. As soon as he had a little recovered his strength, the first use which he made of it was to give at Courson first of all,

and then at the hospital of La Rochelle, an exercise which he called the "Preparation for Death," and which he often gave in places where he had formerly given missions. The manner of performing this exercise deserves to be related. It lasted three days. The holy missionary preached each day two sermons, and added a conference. The sermons touched upon the principal truths which have relation to death, and which he reduced to seven: "*We must die—death is near—death is dreadful—death is terrible—the death of the sinner is to be feared—the death of the just is to be desired—as a man lives so does he die.*" The conferences were more familiar; he replied with simplicity to the questions which an ecclesiastic proposed to him upon the manner of preparing for death, and of meeting its approach. The two first days were employed in making, as it were, a last confession, and on the third day communion was received, as it were by way of *Viaticum;* on the last evening, in order that his previous instructions might make a still greater impression, the holy missionary himself represented a person at the point of death. He was seated in a large chair; near him were two ecclesiastics who performed the office, one of the guardian angel, the other of the tempter-spirit. The dying man, with his crucifix in his hand, pressed it often to his lips and heart, casting at the same time looks full of confidence towards heaven, and asking for mercy. He listened with attention to all the good inspirations of the good angel, and rejected with indignation the suggestions of the evil one, by opposing to them above all, acts of faith, hope, and charity. The whole representation was so natural and touching that it left the most lively impression upon the minds of the audience.

Each one retired in silence, striking his breast, and firmly resolved to lead a holy life, in order to obtain a holy death. So simple a method was not to everyone's taste at La Rochelle; it excited some pleasantry: but the abundant fruits which it produced would have amply consoled the holy priest, had he stood in need of consolation for reproaches which were in themselves his happiness.

After having thus tried his strength he thought himself in a fit state to resume the labours of the missions, and he betook himself, towards the beginning of March, 1714, to Vanneau, a parish in the diocese of Saintes, the worthy pastor of which had called for his ministry. He had already reached the eighteenth day of the mission, and all things seemed to combine towards its success; the fidelity of the people was equal to the zeal of the labourers. All on a sudden, thanks to the intrigues of certain persons, enemies of God as well as of his ministry, a general prohibition was notified to Montfort and his fellow-labourers. The consternation was universal, and several missionaries spoke of returning to La Rochelle, when the Curé determined to go himself and demand justice at the hands of his bishop, and remove the deception which had been practised upon him. Although he had to travel nearly thirty leagues, he returned on the next evening with new powers for the missionaries, whose zeal and labours were only rendered more ardent and efficacious by this passing humiliation. Montfort afterwards gave several other missions in the diocese of La Rochelle, chiefly at Vérines, Saint-Médard, and le Gué-d'Aleret. During the intervals he returned to the town, and it was then that he began to busy himself with the establishment of the poor schools, of which we shall speak later. His last

mission this year was at Roussay, a parish situated at the extremity of the old diocese of La Rochelle, and which now forms part of that of Angers. Drunkenness reigned there, together with all the disorders which usually attend it. It was against this vice that the man of God chiefly directed his efforts. His victory was complete, but he did not obtain it without difficulty; he had to have recourse to every kind of means, and the blessing of heaven proved that they were all alike inspired by the Holy Spirit. We will only give two facts which will serve to show, side by side, his power and his sweetness.

Near to the church was a tavern where all the drunkards of the district were in the habit of assembling. The mission, far from diminishing the disorder, had increased it, and the meetings were on that account more numerous and more noisy, as if the devil meant to set himself up against God. These wretched men did not cease to reproach those who went to the exercises, and took pleasure, in opposition to the pious hymns of the faithful, in singing obscene songs, and uttering disgraceful cries, which were heard in the church. Upon one occasion, especially, the noise was so great that the preacher had difficulty in making himself heard, and the whole audience became angry. Scarcely had he finished his sermon when, filled with the holy anger of his Divine Master, who twice cast out the money changers of the temple, he repaired to the place of scandal, threw down the table which opposed his entrance, spoke to those who were drinking with a firmness which frightened them, and forced them all to withdraw. Two only seemed inclined to offer any resistance; he took them by the arm and led them to the door, threatening them, if they returned, with a more terrible chastisement.

The scandal was not repeated. Another day, while he was preaching, a man called out with a loud voice, and vomited against him every kind of insult. Amongst the congregation some stopped their ears, others demanded that the profane and turbulent fellow should be turned out. But he offered a strong resistance, and the gentle words of the missionary only irritated his rage. Montfort came down from the pulpit, and making his way through the crowd, went straight to the madman, threw himself at his feet, bathed them with tears, and spoke to him with so much tenderness, that immediately to the fury of the wolf there succeeded the gentleness of the lamb. The man went away, and the preacher remounted the pulpit, whilst the example of virtue which he had just given lent a new efficacy to his words.

The ceremony of the erection of the cross was marked by a seemingly miraculous event. The cross was very large, and the place where it was erected so narrow, that the people seemed to be all crushed together. It had just been set up in its place, when, all of a sudden, it fell on the side on which the crowd was thickest. A cry of terror was heard, and it was feared that several persons were crushed. Only one person, however, met with a slight contusion. Montfort did not leave Roussay without giving proof of his favourite devotion. He had found in the parish a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, but entirely abandoned. He repaired it, and placed it again in so decent a condition as to allow of the celebration of the holy mysteries. It afterwards became an object of special devotion. He there established the practice of the holy Rosary, which spread from there into several of the neighbouring dioceses, in which it has since been kept up with great edification.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST PART OF THE VACATION OF 1714, UP TO MONTFORT'S INTERVIEW WITH M. BLAIN AT ROUEN.

The favourable season for the missions had passed away: it was towards the end of July that the mission of Roussay had closed. Montfort profited again this year by the vacation time to make a long journey, and although we do not know his motives we cannot doubt that, as on the preceding year, he had in it the glory of God and the salvation of souls for his principal object. The apostolic traveller was not far from Nantes, and it was towards this city that he directed his first steps. He only remained there a few days, which were spent in providing for the welfare of the incurables who were lodged in his little "Providence," and in reanimating the fervour of those whom he had formerly converted and persuaded to enter upon the path of perfection, particularly those whom he had formed, in the parish of Saint-Similien, into the association of the Friends of the Cross. From Nantes he went to Rennes, where he made a retreat of eight or ten days. It appears that the cross was the chief subject of his meditations; for it was then that, in order to console himself for not being able publicly to address his "dear friends of the cross," at Nantes, he wrote to them that admirable letter which might be supposed to have come from the hand of St. Paul, so entirely does it breathe the spirit of the great apostle. The man of God lays open to us his heart; we see, as it were, an overflow of that love of the cross which

transported him. The words press one upon another under his pen, always strong, and yet always too weak to his liking. It is as a whole that this letter should be read, in order to obtain a just idea of the sublimity of his thoughts, the vivacity of his feelings, and the originality of his style. It will be given almost entire at the end of this life.

Montfort quitted Rennes a very few days after his retreat, but not without having previously done much good to several persons, and in particular to M. Dorville, sub-delegate of the Intendant of Brittany. The holy traveller had gone to his house to pay a visit to the Marquis de Magnane, a man of great virtue, with whom he was particularly acquainted, and of whom we shall afterwards have occasion to speak. The marquis led his friend into the garden, in order to speak more freely with him upon certain matters of conscience. They were not there long alone. As soon as the name of the new-comer was known, the whole company, with the exception of M. Dorville, lost no time in joining them. The missionary spoke to them of God in so touching a way that they were, so to speak, completely carried away. They listened to him for several hours, almost without taking notice of the time.

At the end it occurred to a lady of the house to ask the holy priest whether he had dined, and upon his answering that he was still fasting, they made him enter the house to take some refreshment. M. Dorville thought it would be only polite to keep him company. The man of God, who doubtless was still full of what he had just been saying, began by asking him whether he "*was very devout to the Blessed Virgin.*" Then, drawing out of his pocket a little statue of our Lady, made of box-wood, which he always carried

about him, and which is still preserved, he placed it on the table, thanked the august Mother of God for that which she had inspired her servants to provide for his wants, and prayed her in the most touching manner to pour her benedictions upon the house of M. Dorville, in recompense for the charity which had been shown to a poor one of Jesus Christ. It was not long before his prayer was heard. M. Dorville, who at first hardly knew what to think of such an introduction, had no sooner entered into conversation with the holy priest, than he conceived for him the highest esteem. His words made an impression upon his mind which he had never before experienced. He soon found himself changed into another man, promised from that time to say the holy rosary every day, and begged the man of God to be himself his guide in the way of salvation.

On leaving Rennes Montfort took the road to Avranches, and arrived in that town on the 14th of August. As it was already late, he could not present himself to the bishop before the next morning to obtain leave to say Mass. He was very badly received. The bishop, still indignant at having been quite recently deceived by two adventurers whose certificates had been seemingly in order, would take no account whatever of those of the Bishops of Nantes and La Rochelle, with which Montfort was provided. He said to him, that, far from authorizing him to exercise his ministry in his diocese, it was his wish that he should leave it as quickly as he could. The holy traveller received this order without showing the least change of countenance. One thing only would have sensibly pained him, and that would have been not to be able to say Mass on a day so dear to him as that of the Assumption; but without losing time he hired a horse, and rode

into the diocese of Coutances. Arrived at Ville-Dieu before midday, he obtained leave of the Curé of the parish to celebrate the holy mysteries in his church. He lost no time in continuing his journey, and went in the direction of Saint-Lô, in company with a young man named Brother Nicholas. Night overtook them, very much fatigued, near a village, which they entered to ask for food and lodging: but everything was refused them, and they were obliged to pass the night at the foot of a well, surmounted by a hand holding a little cross. The place was not well suited to offer repose to men who were exhausted by fatigue and hunger. Montfort, being unable to sleep, knew how to employ his time in other ways. The idea of the hand holding the cross lit up his imagination, and inspired him with many thoughts, which he then and there worked into the hymn "*J'ai partout la Croix à la main.*" On the next morning the travellers went on to Saint-Lô.

Montfort's first visit was to the fervent community of the Good Shepherd, which had recently been founded by Madame du Manoir. He there met with a young and worthy priest, M. Le François, at that time Vicaire, and afterwards Curé of Saint-Lô, who without having ever seen him, already venerated him as a saint, in consequence of all that he had heard related of him in Brittany. In order to detain him for at least some little time in the town, M. Le François took upon himself the charge of finding work for his zeal, and began by taking him to the hospital, where the man of God consented to give a retreat to the poor. But he soon had to change this retreat into a regular mission for the whole town. The Bishop of Coutances granted all the necessary faculties. At his very first sermon the missionary seemed to have been sent by God to put an end to

the disorders which were then reigning at Saint Lô. The people soon came in crowds to hear him, and persons of every condition, ecclesiastics as well as laymen, asked each other with astonishment, "Who this stranger could be who had arrived in their town with nothing but the staff in his hand, but who was nevertheless followed with so much eagerness?" But if such success was for many a subject of joy, it did but excite in others feelings of hatred or jealousy. Attempts were made to prejudice the Bishop of Coutances against the preacher, and they succeeded so far as to cause him to withdraw his faculties. But the man of God had only need of a moment's conversation with the bishop instantly to recover his good graces and the support of his authority.

The mission of Saint-Lô is perhaps the one in which Montfort has given the clearest proofs of the justness of his views, and the extent of his learning. He was persuaded to give conferences in which any one who liked might propose difficulties to him upon every kind of subject, and he acquitted himself of this task in a manner as honourable to himself, as it was useful to his neighbours. One day, several priests and religious, into whose motives we will not inquire, concerted together to embarrass the holy missionary, and to push him into a difficulty. They thought perhaps that to do this no great skill was required. They determined, however, to exercise their diligence to the full, and repaired to the church fortified, as they thought, with the strongest arguments. No sooner had one difficulty been solved, than another was presented. It was no longer a conference, but a formal dispute, in which the preacher had to reply, without preparation, to several doctors whose attack had been premeditated. The whole of the audience re-

mained in suspense, and however high their idea of the preacher, they could scarcely hope that he would be able to answer every difficulty. However, he did so with a skill which only yielded to his modesty. The admiration was general. The holy priest would have been but little affected by this good opinion of him, had it not contributed to the conversion of sinners. But after his learning had drawn them to himself, his holiness attracted them to God, and the confessional finished what the pulpit had begun. The mission was of the happiest kind, and was brought to a close by the solemn erection of the cross. The following is the testimony given by M. Le François more than forty years afterwards. "It would be impossible for me," he says, "to relate all the good which M. de Montfort did at Saint-Lô, the conversions which he brought about, and the heroic acts of virtue which he practised, and of which I myself was a witness. He knew so well how to make piety appreciated, that a number of persons who are still living a holy life are the ever-abiding fruit of his preaching. So well did he preach the devotion of the rosary that the custom of publicly reciting it has been ever since observed."

Montfort was very desirous, before leaving Normandy, to see his old friend, M. Blain, who at that time resided at Rouen: perhaps this had been one of the chief objects of his journey. There is reason to believe that the Spirit of God brought about this interview for the consolation of M. Blain, who at this moment stood in need of counsel, and still more perhaps in order to give him the means of publishing at a later period the secret sentiments of his friend, which he did in a manuscript which is still preserved, and from which we have already often quoted. Nevertheless,

as Montfort had only a short time at his disposal, he wrote to M. Blain to come and meet him at Caen; but on receiving his answer, in which M. Blain begged of him rather to come himself to Rouen, he set out at once for that city, with a chain round his body, and circlets of iron round his arms. He arrived so changed and exhausted, that his friend judged him to be not far off his end.

CHAPTER VII.

SECOND PART OF THE VACATION OF 1714, AFTER MONTFORT'S INTERVIEW WITH M. BLAIN AT ROUEN.

At the very first interview which he had with Montfort, M. Blain began by unburdening his heart of all the objections which he had heard made against his conduct and behaviour. "I asked him," he himself tells us, "what were his designs, and whether he hoped ever to find men who would consent to follow him in the life which he was leading. I remarked that a life so poor, so hard, so given up to Providence, was only for apostles, and for men of rare strength and grace and virtue; for extraordinary men, for himself who had been drawn to it by grace, but not for ordinary men who could not reach so high; and that it would be rashness to attempt it; that if he wished to associate other ecclesiastics with himself in his designs and labours, he must either relax the rigour of his life, and the sublimity of his practices of perfection, in order to condescend to their weakness, and conform to their ordinary kind of life, or raise them to his own standard

by the infusion of his own grace and perfect dispositions."

"He replied by showing me his New Testament, and asked me if I could teach over again in any better way what Jesus Christ has practised and taught, and if I could show him a life more like to that of our Blessed Lord and His apostles than a life which was poor, mortified, and founded upon resignation to Providence; that he had no other object but to follow it, and no other design but to persevere in it. That if God wished to unite with him certain good ecclesiastics in this kind of life he would be delighted; but that this was God's business, not his; that so far as he was concerned, he had no other course to take but that of the Gospel, and to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and His disciples. 'What can you say against it?' he added. 'Am I doing wrong? They who do not wish to follow me are walking by another path, less laborious, and less thorny, and I approve of it; for as there are many mansions in our Heavenly Father's House, so also there are several paths to reach it. I let them walk in their own way, let me walk in mine, and all the more so, because you cannot dispute its advantages; that it is that which Jesus Christ has taught by His example and His counsels; that it is in consequence the shortest, surest, most perfect way to go to Him.' Having thus closed my mouth upon this point, he lost no time in doing the same with regard to the next. 'But where do you find,' I asked, 'in the Gospel any proofs or examples of your singular and extraordinary behaviour? Why do you not renounce it, or ask of God the grace to give it up? Opposition and persecutions follow you everywhere, because your singularity draws them down upon you; you would do much more good and

you would meet with more assistance and relief in your labours if you could persuade yourself to do nothing extraordinary, nor to furnish bad and worldly men with arms against yourself and the success of your ministry, drawn from your own singularities.' I then mentioned to him the names of certain persons of consummate wisdom. 'These,' I said, 'are models upon which you can mould your conduct; they do not cause themselves to be spoken about, and you, in your turn, would not cause yourself to be so much spoken about if you were to imitate them.' He replied that if his behaviour were singular or extraordinary, this was indeed contrary to his intention; that being natural to him he did not perceive it, and that, being calculated to humble him, it was not without its use. That, as for the rest, it was necessary to explain what was meant by singular and extraordinary behaviour; that if by that were understood actions of zeal, charity, mortification, and other practices of heroic and uncommon virtue, then he esteemed himself happy in being in this sense singular; and that if this kind of singularity were a defect it was the defect of all the saints; that, after all, the title of singular was acquired at little cost in this world; that we are sure to be called so, if we refuse ever so little to resemble the multitude, or to conform our life to its taste; that we are under the necessity of appearing singular in this world, if we would separate ourselves from the multitude of the reprobate; that the number of the elect being small, we must either refuse to belong to them or become singular along with them; that is to say, we must lead a life altogether opposed to that of the multitude.

"He added, that there were different kinds, as there were different degrees of prudence; that the

prudence of a person living in community as to his conduct was one thing, the prudence of a missionary, and apostolic man, quite another: that the former had nothing new to undertake, and nothing to do but to let himself be guided by the rule and customs of a well-regulated house; but the latter had to procure the glory of God at his own expense, and to execute new designs; but we must not, therefore, be astonished, if the former lived in peace by living concealed, and if he did not cause himself to be spoken about, having nothing new to undertake; but that the latter having continually to fight with the world, the devil and sin, had also, continually, on his part, to suffer terrible persecutions; and that it is a sign that we are exciting no great fear in hell, if we remain friends with the world; that the persons whom I had proposed to him as models of prudence, were of the first kind; persons who remained concealed in their houses, which they governed in peace, because they had nothing new to establish, and nothing to do but to follow the footsteps and the customs of those who had gone before them; but it was not the same with regard to missionaries and apostolic men: that, having always something new to take in hand, some holy work to establish or to defend, it was impossible they should not be spoken about, or that opinions should not be formed with regard to them by all around them; that, indeed, if prudence consisted in doing nothing new for God, in undertaking nothing for His glory, for fear of being spoken about, then the apostles were wrong in leaving Jerusalem; they should have remained shut up in the Cenaculum; St. Paul would never have made so many journeys, nor St. Peter have attempted to plant the cross upon the Capitol, and conquer the Queen-city of the world for Jesus Christ; that, with prudence

like this, the Synagogue would never have been stirred, or have raised persecutions against our Saviour's little flock; but, on the other hand, that this little flock would never have increased in number, and the world would be still at the present day what it was then, idolatrous, perverted, corrupt in its morals and in its maxims, to a sovereign degree. I also told him that he was accused of doing whatever came into his head, and that it would be far better to do less good, and to do it in a spirit of dependence upon others, by consulting his superiors, and by undertaking nothing without their order and permission. He agreed with me, but added that he thought that he followed this plan in everything that he could, and that he should be very sorry to do anything out of his own head; but that on certain unlooked-for and sudden occasions and accidents, it was not possible for him to take the advice or orders of his superiors; that it was sufficient, in these cases, to have the intention of doing nothing to displease them, or to merit their disapprobation, and to be disposed to obey the least sign of their will. As for the rest, it sometimes happened, that works begun with the consent of superiors, were deprived of their approval at their close, either because they had been prejudiced by ill-intentioned persons, estranged by false reports, or because they gave ear to the rumours of the world, and the opinions of the worldly-wise, who are hardly ever favourable to holy works; that in that case there was no other course to take, but to submit to the orders of Providence, and heartily to receive crosses and persecutions, as the crown and recompense of our labours; that he was, indeed, convinced that obedience being the certain mark of the will of God, must never be departed from, but that his conscience did not reproach him upon this sub-

ject; and that he was ready at all times, and in all circumstances, to obey, and to do nothing except with the consent of his superiors; but that it was out of his power to prevent false reports, slanders, calumnies, envious and jealous actions, which the enemy knew well how to bring within the reach of his superiors, in order to prejudice them against him, and render both himself and his services odious in their sight.

"I made to him several other objections, which I thought unanswerable; but he replied to them in words so just, so concise, and so full of the Spirit of God, that I found, to my astonishment, that upon every point on which I had thought it my duty to close his lips, he had closed my own. I was at that time in a state of great perplexity with regard to a benefice in the city of Rouen, which I did not know whether to accept or not. M. de Montfort said to me in precise terms: '*You will accept it; you will have many crosses, and you will leave it;*' all of which happened to me as he had foretold. This is the second prediction which he had made to me in very clear terms, and with regard to matters which he could only know by the light of Heaven. In the conversation which we had together, he confessed to me that God had favoured him with a very special grace, which was the *abiding presence of Jesus and Mary in the bottom of his soul.* I had difficulty in understanding so high a favour; but I did not wish to ask him for an explanation, and perhaps he could not himself have given it; for in the mystical life there are operations of grace which are inexplicable, even to the souls which are favoured with them.

"I asked him to say the holy Mass the next morning at the altar called, '*des Voeux*,' in the cathedral of Rouen, which is dedicated to God in

honour of the Blessed Virgin, in order that he might satisfy his devotion to the Holy Mother. He said it with so much outward piety and tenderness of devotion, that he attracted the attention of the congregation, who were but little accustomed to see such devout priests at the holy altar. He then went to see a nun of the Holy Sacrament, with whom he was acquainted, who begged of him to give a conference to the community. He spoke upon the spirit of sacrifice with his own peculiar unction. In the evening, I got him to preach to a community of school-mistresses; his discourse was upon the advantages of virginity, a subject which his great love of purity made it agreeable and pleasant for him to treat; he spoke, therefore, in the spirit and in the terms of the Ambroses and Jeromes, who have themselves spoken so divinely upon this subject."

On leaving Rouen, Montfort took a place in the boat called "La Bouille." "It was," says M. Blain, "a perfect Noah's ark, filled with all kinds of animals; as many as two hundred passengers were ordinarily to be found on board. Hardly had our missionary entered, than he knelt down, and, taking in his hand his large rosary, he exhorted his travelling companions to say it with him. The kneeling position of the priest, and his proposal to say the rosary, afforded the assembled crowd a good subject for laughter. The holy priest continued to kneel and pray, and allowed the company to amuse themselves at their pleasure, no doubt offering this humiliation to God, in order to merit grace for those who laughed at his expense. When they had finished, he began again, and again proposed to them to say the rosary; the laughter recommenced, and continued for some time; after which, the devout priest, whose zea was inflamed by these humiliations, proposed to

them, for the third time, to say the rosary, with a look so full of the Spirit of God, that he persuaded the whole company to say the whole rosary, and after that to listen to his instructions, which lasted until they left the boat. This fact was related to me by a person who was present. Those who knew what these boats are, and the kind of people who are ordinarily found on board, will look upon it as a miracle in the order of grace."

The rest of Montfort's journey to Nantes, was what might have been expected from such a beginning. Having stopped one Saturday in a parish to say mass, the Curé asked him, as a favour, to stay over the next day, which was the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost, to preach to his people. The missionary accepted the offer, and on the next day he preached two sermons on the Gospel of the Sunday, which produced a lively impression upon the whole congregation. The people were melted into tears, and the priests, who were present, asked one another, who this strange priest could be, who had preached with so much unction, and whose whole conduct had been so edifying. The Curé himself made several attempts to discover who he was, but the man of God gave him no other answer, except that "he was a poor priest, who ran through the world in the hopes of gaining some poor soul by his discourses and labours, with the help of the grace of his good Master."

Travelling, which for so many others is but an occasion of dissipation and sin, offered no temptation to Montfort; it scarcely even served to rouse him from his deep recollection. His silence was so continual, that his travelling companion was often deprived for days together of the consolation of conversing with him. He often made a sign to him to walk on in front of him, and when his companion looked back to see whether his master was

following him, he saw him sometimes prostrate with his face upon the ground, adoring God. Out of respect to the presence of God, he walked almost always bare-headed, with his eyes fixed upon the crucifix which he held in his hand. It was thus he arrived in the diocese of Nantes. He was still three leagues from the town, when his companion found himself so overpowered with fatigue, as not to be able to take another step forwards. The charitable father, seeing no other means of relieving his child, wished to carry him on his shoulders; he made the most earnest entreaties to be allowed to do so; but, as his companion would not hear of it, he made him at least take off his habit, which was very heavy, took it in one hand, and, with the other, supporting the brother under the arm, he helped him to the best of his power to walk along. On coming near the town, the good brother, feeling ashamed at the great number of persons whom they met, said to him, every now and then, "Dear Father, what will all the people say?" "My dear son," replied Montfort, "what will our good Jesus say, who sees us?"

Arrived at Nantes, the missionary went, according to his custom, to his little hospital of incurables. He took no longer time to repose after his long journey than what was required for the necessary arrangements which had to be made in the chapel adjoining the hospital, in order to provide a suitable position for the statues which had first of all been placed on the Calvary at Pontchâteau, and afterwards deposited for the space of four years in a house in the town. He then set out from Nantes very early in the morning, in order to say Mass at Savenay, in a convent of the nuns of St. Francis, which lay on his road. He was received there as if he had been an angel:

all the sisters wished to receive his benediction; and he profited by this occasion to address them a few words, well calculated to rekindle their fervour. He only arrived at Pontchâteau at nightfall. Attempts were made to dissuade him from going to the house of the Curé of the parish, and he was told that he would be badly received; but he replied that he always considered M. le Curé as one of his best friends; and, indeed, he met with a cordial reception. On the next morning, he hired two carts, on which, with great difficulty, he succeeded in placing his statues, so that they might meet with no accident on the journey.

He met with still greater difficulty in unloading them on the banks of the Loire, and in placing them on board the boat which was to convey them to Nantes. The greater part of the boatmen, and other lookers on, refused to assist him, and amused themselves at his expense. It was for them an amusing spectacle, to see a priest throwing himself desperately into the mud, and working as if he were the poorest of the poor. As for the man of God, the trouble was nothing to him; for, full of devotion to the person of Jesus Crucified, there was nothing which he would not willingly have undergone, even for His image. At last, he came to the end of his labour, but the fatigue which it cost him may be imagined. Whilst the boat sailed down to Nantes, he retired into an inn in order to give time to the brother, who accompanied him, to wash his clothes. Then, putting them on while they were still soaking wet, he set out on his journey, and walked all night, in order to be in time for the arrival of the boat.

After having placed his statues in their place, and finding that there still remained a few days before the period fixed for his return to La Rochelle, Montfort yielded to the entreaties of

M. Dorville, of Rennes, who, from their very first interview, had pressed him to return and pay him a visit. The stay which the man of God made at his house was of great use to him for his advancement in perfection. He understood so well how to make the missionary's characteristic piety his own, that, like him, he seemed ever afterwards full of the holy folly of the cross, which raises a soul above all human respect, and causes it to find its happiness in sufferings and humiliations. This conformity of disposition brought about the closest union between the disciple and the master, so that when the time came for them to separate, it was for M. Dorville a sensible affliction. He accompanied Montfort a good distance out of the town, and, on parting from him, was unable to restrain his tears. The man of God, who perceived this, was very much affected, and, making over him the sign of the cross, he said to him three times, "Sir, I wish you many crosses." Prophetic words, which presaged the misfortunes which he had afterwards to undergo, and in which he showed forth that heroic courage which he had drawn from his conversations with the missionary.

Before leaving Rennes, Montfort showed, on two occasions, that the present, as well as the future, had no secrets for him. The concourse of persons attracted by his presence, could not fail to bring with it many expenses, and Madame Dorville was tempted somewhat to complain. One day, when she was speaking to her mother upon the subject, in a corner of the garden, the missionary approached, and smilingly inquired the subject of her conversation. "What!" she said, in the same playful tone, "do you find it wrong for a daughter to speak to her mother?" "Oh! no," replied the man of God, "but what I complain of, is the spirit of self-interest which rules you!"

On another occasion, Frère Nicolas, who accompanied him, yielding to the entreaties of a woman-servant of the house, related to her several particularities of the life of the holy missionary, and this took place in the evening after the hour for retiring to rest. On the next morning, having gone, according to custom, to ask permission to communicate, Montfort refused him. The brother was quite certain that his master, in his apartment, could have heard nothing of the conversation of the evening before. What then was his astonishment, when Montfort said to him: "You have broken the rule which obliges you to retire to rest at nine o'clock, and you have spoken indiscreetly to the servant with regard to me!"

The time for the missions recalled the indefatigable labourer to the diocese of La Rochelle, from which he had been absent about three months. He hastened to return in the hope of finding, as usual, his path strewn with thorns. But this time his expectations were disappointed. As he had to pass through several places where he had formerly laboured, the people came in crowds to meet him, and endeavoured to show him numerous marks of gratitude and veneration. They pressed round him to ask his blessing, and this took place so often, that he was obliged to pass on without stopping, contenting himself with saying: "My little children, my dear children, I pray our Lord to bless you, and to make you all saints." They all shed tears at parting from him, as if, like the faithful of Ephesus, when they took leave of St. Paul for the last time, they felt the presentiment that they should see his face no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

MONTFORT'S LABOURS FROM THE VACATION OF 1714, TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM, AT LA ROCHELLE, IN 1715.

A journey of three hundred leagues, made in about three months, on foot, and with great fatigue, seemed to require at least a little rest. But the man of God knew no other repose except what he could find in diversifying his labours. His first care, immediately upon his return to La Rochelle, was to press on the necessary arrangements for the establishment of the poor schools, of which we have previously spoken. He had given orders, as we have said, before he left, but hardly anything had been done during his absence. The activity which he manifested in this good work was incredible. When, at length, he saw the matter in fair progress, he hastened to resume the course of his missions. His first mission was at Fouras, a poor parish, four leagues distant from La Rochelle. Having arrived in dreadful weather, and by impassable roads, the evangelical labourers could find no other lodging than an old garret, so little adapted to guard them against the rigours of winter, that they often found in the morning their beds covered with snow. But nothing was so painful to Montfort as the frightful nakedness of the house of God, in which everything was wanting. And how was he to procure means amongst a people, whom ignorance had rendered so hard-hearted and rude, as to leave the missionaries without any

assistance? If only they had been disposed to profit by their holy instructions, it might still have been well, but for some time no dew from heaven fell upon that ungrateful soil. At last, the prayers and austerities of the holy priest obtained the conversion of these poor people, and God rewarded His servant by the abundant blessing which He shed upon his labours.

From Fouras, Montfort crossed to the island of Aix, where his ministry produced its full effect among the soldiers of the garrison, as well as amongst the inhabitants. They all of them showed a promptitude in attending the exercises which might have been admired in a community, and the soldiers themselves relished so well the examples and lessons of the holy missionary, that it was necessary to procure for them a large number of disciplines, and other instruments of penance. The return passage was extremely painful; an accident obliged them to remain almost a whole day at sea, under a very strong north wind. Whilst all the passengers went down into the hold, and pressed round the fire, Montfort remained the whole time upon deck, praying or singing hymns. Scarcely had he set foot on land, when he took his way towards Saint-Laurent-de-la-Prée, and as another not very populous parish was situated at no great distance from it, he undertook to give the mission in the two churches at the same time. The churches and cemeteries were unworthily profaned; one of Montfort's objects was to remedy these abuses. Not to speak of the rigour of the season, and the scarcity of the commonest necessaries, he had to suffer far more at the hands of a priest, whom he had asked to join him in giving this mission. This wretched man did not cease to disparage the man of God in a dreadful manner. "I was so scandalised at the conduct of this arrant

slanderer," says M. des Bastières, "that I thought myself obliged, in conscience, to warn M. de Montfort of what was said against him: I even used every effort to persuade him to send him away; but the servant of God, far from following my advice, loaded him with civilities, and showed him a thousand kindnesses, placing him at table on his right hand; nor did he ever in any way reproach him for what he knew concerning him. Was not this to imitate the conduct of Jesus Christ with regard to the traitor Judas?"

The important matter of the schools soon called the holy missionary to La Rochelle, and obliged him to stay there some weeks. But although he gave his attention to the schools, he did not on that account cease to busy himself in the ministry of God's word, and in the direction of souls. He was continually surrounded by persons who came to ask his advice. Poor and rich, great and small, ecclesiastics and laymen, all were desirous of speaking with him, and all were received with the same pleasantness. It was at this time that there shone upon him, as formerly upon St. Stephen, a reflection of the glory of Tabor. One day, as he was preaching in the church of the Dominicans, (it was the second of February, the feast of the Purification, and he was speaking on the grandeurs of Mary), his countenance, worn out by austerities and fatigue, appeared suddenly luminous; rays of glory, as it were, went out from it, and his face became changed, to so great a degree, that his friends, even those who were most in the habit of seeing him, although they looked at him quite close, and very earnestly, could not recognise him by his voice. This marvel made so great an impression upon those who were present, and inspired them with so much respect for the preacher, that, instead of leaving after the high mass, they all

remained for the mass which he himself afterwards celebrated.

About the same time, that is to say, about the beginning of Lent, Montfort gave a public retreat in the church of the nuns of Providence, which a circumstance has rendered ever memorable. It was then that, in attaching irrevocably to himself his first missionary, he laid the foundation of his Company of Mary. M. Adrien Vatel, of the diocese of Coutances, had had the advantage of being brought up by M. Desplaces, the worthy founder of the community of Saint-Esprit. He aspired to the honour of carrying the faith to foreign lands, and at this moment he was at La Rochelle for the purpose of embarking. He had made his arrangements with a captain, but he happened by chance to enter the church of La Providence, just as Montfort was mounting the pulpit. The sermon did not come up to the idea which he had formed of the missionary, and he knew not what to think of him. All of a sudden the preacher stopped. "There is here," he said, "some one who is resisting me: I feel that the word of God comes back to me; but he shall not escape me." M. Vatel could not help applying to himself part at least of these words. The sermon over, he went to pay his respects to Montfort. The missionary happened at the time to be reading a letter from a priest who excused himself from going with him upon a mission. "That is well," he said, as he saw M. Vatel enter, "one priest breaks his word, here is another whom our good God sends me in his stead. You must come with me, Sir, and we will labour together." M. Vatel replied that the thing was impossible, as he was on the eve of starting for the foreign missions. Whereupon he communicated to Montfort the uneasiness which he felt as to the validity of his

faculties for those distant countries. Montfort did not hesitate to give his decision, and proved to him by solid reasons that his mission was insufficient, and his faculties null. As he made use of this new motive to detain him, M. Vatel mentioned, as an additional objection, the engagements into which he had entered with the captain, who had already advanced him a hundred crowns. "That is indeed a great difficulty," replied Montfort, smiling, "Mgr. the Bishop of La Rochelle will repay him." Upon this, they went together to call upon the prelate, who decided the first difficulty in the same way as the missionary had done, and settled the second by taking from his writing desk the hundred crowns which the captain had advanced. But the latter was not satisfied with his money, he bitterly complained that he had been deprived of his chaplain, and swore that he would kill Montfort wherever he might find him. At this news the holy priest went in search of him, and calmly addressing him, said, "I am told, Sir, that you wish to take away my life. Here I am, I have come to give it to you." Nothing more was needed to pacify the captain; they embraced and parted good friends.

Accompanied henceforth by M. Vatel, Montfort lost no time in resuming the course of his missions. He gave, first of all, a very successful one at Taugon-la-Ronde, and then another, no less successful, at Saint-Amand, a small town which is at present in the diocese of Poitiers. The latter began on Good Friday. During this mission the missionary's chief work was to enlighten the people, who were very superstitious, and who saw charms, witchcraft, and possession in almost everything. The success which he obtained in this kind of work was not one of the least triumphs of his ministry. He succeeded in like

manner in inspiring general devotion, and a great activity in enclosing the cemetery with walls, which up to that time had been little better than an open and public square. One day, when the concourse was so great that the church could not nearly contain the crowd, he ordered the pulpit to be placed at the foot of a large tree, and as every one pressed forward for fear of not being able to hear, he said, "Do not press forward, my dear brethren, God has given me the grace to command the attention of the whole of my audience; stay all of you just where you are, and you will be able to hear me well." And indeed, many persons, although placed at a distance where naturally they could not hear him, nevertheless did not lose a single word.

Montfort had spared himself so little during this mission, that when it was over, his health, becoming weaker day by day, obliged him to spend a week at La Seguinière, where the Demoiselles de Beauveau had invited him to rest himself. From there, after having made a short stay at Nantes for the good of his house of incurables, he hastened to set out for Mervent, near Fontenay-le-Comte, in order to commence a mission. What he there accomplished for God's material temple may give some idea of the change which he wrought in His interior temple of souls. The roof was rotten, the walls half open, the window glass almost entirely broken; there was neither decency nor even safety for the celebration of the Divine Offices. The missionary knew so well how to inspire confidence and inflame the zeal of his audience, both parishioners and strangers, that they all displayed an equal eagerness for the restoration of the church. With the same pleasure they also lent him their assistance to carry out his idea of building a little hermitage

in the middle of the immense forest of Vouvant, by which Mervent was surrounded. Feeling his end approaching, he felt ever more and more the need of complete retirement, at least from time to time, in order to busy himself with his own salvation, and to unite himself more closely with God. On the slope of a hill, at the foot of which La Vendée winds along, he chose for himself a cavern formed by nature out of an enormous rock, and he undertook to make it habitable. Everyone thought himself happy to assist him. His design, however, was never entirely carried out. He was only able to pass a few days in this hermitage, but the spot itself has been always consecrated in the memory of the people as a place blessed by God. Even at the present day, from all the neighbouring villages men still love to go there and pray, and it is the general opinion that more than once their devotion has been rewarded by miraculous favours.

CHAPTER IX.

FOUNDATION OF THE POOR SCHOOLS, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM AT LA ROCHELLE IN 1715.

Montfort had now for a long time been impressed by the truth that the surest remedy for licentiousness and irreligion is a good education for the young. Full of the spirit of His Divine Master, he had always had a tender love for children; he took pleasure in instructing them himself, and one of his chief cares in every mission was to provide the parish with schoolmasters and

mistresses. The want of such teachers was still greater at La Rochelle, where the children were either totally abandoned, or entrusted to the hands of heretics. The holy priest, although he foresaw innumerable difficulties, undertook to remedy the evil by founding Catholic poor schools. He was of opinion that the girls' school would succeed admirably, if placed in the hands of his two Sisters of Wisdom, who were at Poitiers, and that this would prove a door opened for them by Providence, through which they might enter into the exercise of their functions and so increase their number. After having thought the matter well over in the presence of God, he went to Mgr. de Champflour, and laid his plan before him with great simplicity. For the first time he told him of the congregation begun by him under the title of the Daughters of Wisdom, related to him every particular in connection with it, and made special mention of Sister Marie Louise of Jesus. The pious and learned prelate listened to him with a lively interest, and foreseeing all the good which such a project would produce, he earnestly persuaded him to put it into execution. He urged him to complete his great work of the Daughters of Wisdom, and charged him to invite them to come and take the direction of the girls' school. He added that he himself would provide the money required for the establishment of the two schools.

The holy priest no longer hesitated, and set to work with entire confidence. He began by writing to Sister Marie Louise of Jesus, giving her notice to make every arrangement, so as to be able to leave Poitiers within six months. This took place about the beginning of the vacation of 1714, of which he took advantage, as we have seen, to make his journey into Brittany and Nor-

mandy. We have already related his great activity, after his return, in hurrying on the preparations for the establishment of the schools, and that, in the month of February, 1715, he had interrupted the course of his missions in order to return to La Rochelle and push forward still further this important matter. The boys' school was opened first; he placed in it three masters, of whom one was a priest specially entrusted with the spiritual welfare of the children. Montfort drew up most minute rules for the guidance of both masters and scholars, with all the ability which his long experience could give. Even the classes were arranged with rare prudence. Opposite the master was a bench raised somewhat above the rest, which he named the bench of the seraphim; on it were to be placed those children who had made their first communion, or were more advanced. On each side four other benches, called after the names of the angelic choirs, were destined for the rest of the children, arranged according to their age and capacity. These benches were in the form of a semicircle, so that nothing might escape the master's eye. The zealous founder, not content with drawing up the rules and method of teaching, went himself to explain them and watch over their execution. Nor was it long before the whole town recognised with admiration the marvellous change which this school had produced in the crowd of children who attended it.

As for the girls' school, Sister Marie Louise of Jesus, immediately after the reception of Montfort's letter, had taken whatever measures she could, without, however, betraying her secret. But when, at the end of some months, the order arrived to hold herself ready to start at the first signal, and when she was at last obliged to make

known her departure, a thousand difficulties arose. Had she been less judicious she must have been deceived; had her courage been less firm she must have failed. Her mother expressed the voice of nature, the directors of the hospital that of interest, and certain well-intentioned persons that of piety; in a word, all things united together to detain Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus at Poitiers, and it required the finger of God to remove the various obstacles which opposed her pious designs. At last she set out, accompanied by her only companion, Sœur de la Conception. Montfort was engaged in the mission at Taugon, when the two sisters arrived. Immediately after this mission, and before beginning that of Saint-Amand, he escaped, so to speak, for an instant, in order to go and see the newly-arrived sisters, whose position required his presence. He met them at a country house called Petit-Plessis, a quarter of a league from La Rochelle. It was at this first interview that he said to Sister Marie Louise of Jesus these beautiful words: "It is you, my daughter, whom God has chosen to be the head of this little community, which has only just been born. In the letter which I wrote to you in common, I signified to you, by naming you Mother-Superioress, that it was the will of God who would have it so. You have need of great firmness; but gentleness must prevail over everything else. Look, my daughter, look at the poor hen with her chickens under her wings, with what attention she takes care of them, with what tenderness she loves them! Well, then, it is thus that you must act, and behave towards all the daughters, whose mother you will henceforth become." On leaving Petit-Plessis, for La Rochelle, Montfort reminded the sister of what he had said to her on leaving the hospital of Poitiers, that if there were to be

no Daughters of Wisdom for ten years to come, God's will would be accomplished. He added: "Count up now, and you will see that ten years have passed since I told you that." And as the sister could not help telling him her fears on the subject of the hospital of Poitiers, he replied upon the spot: "Console yourself, all is not lost for the hospital of Poitiers. They will ask for you again; you will return and remain there." This good daughter had never forgotten his first prediction, which she now saw accomplished; still less did she forget the second, which in like manner she saw accomplished, when, in 1748, at the request of the administrators of the hospital of Poitiers, she returned there with five of her daughters, to undertake its management. Montfort could only make at that time a short stay at La Rochelle; but, after his mission at Mervent, he went back and spent there the month of July and the first days of August, and it was then that he gave the finishing touch to the institution of the Daughters of Wisdom. Not only, as is related in the life of Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus, did he busy himself in providing for their temporal wants, in perfecting their school regime, in increasing their number by giving them two or three new companions; but he applied himself, above all, to thoroughly teach them the religious spirit, which they themselves were to transmit to so many others. This is why, in his retirement, at Saint-Eloi, in the same hermitage in which he had before composed the rule for the Missionaries of the Company of Mary, he completed the rule of the Daughters of Wisdom; and, after having taken the advice of Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus, he copied it out again, and gave it her, saying, "Take this rule, my daughter, observe it, and see that it is observed by those who will be under your guidance."

The sister threw herself on her knees, and received it as the most precious present which could be made her. It is, indeed, a masterpiece of wisdom and piety. Several great bishops have approved of it, and one, as learned as he was pious, could not help crying out, as he was reading it, "Whoever shall keep this rule, will be an angel."

The holy founder took advantage of the few days which he had still to spend near his daughters, and spoke to them often out of the abundance of his heart of the way of perfection, and God's designs with regard to them. In one of these conversations he suddenly stopped, transported, as it were, out of himself, and his countenance became quite transfigured. "My daughter," he cried, "God is showing me at this moment wonderful things: I see, in the secrets of God, a nursery of Daughters of Wisdom." The event, as will be shown elsewhere, has verified this prediction beyond all hope. At last, the day approached, on which Montfort had promised to open a mission at Fontenay-le-Comte; he was obliged to quit La Rochelle, and it was for the last time. He never again saw his daughters; but he continued to the end to direct them by his letters. On the 31st of December he wrote to them these words: "I wish you a year full of combats and victories, of poverty and contempt." Towards the middle of April, that is to say, only ten or twelve days before his death, he wrote to them from Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, the following letter, which may be regarded as his precious testament, and the last breath, as it were, of a heart which had never breathed except for the love of the cross.

"My very dear Daughters in Jesus Christ.

"Vive Jésus, Vive Sa Croix!

"I adore the just and loving wisdom of God in His guidance of His little flock, which is but poorly lodged amongst men, that one day it may be well and amply lodged in His Divine Heart, which has been pierced for this very end. O, how salutary and pleasant is this sacred hiding-place to a truly wise soul! From here it came forth with the blood and water which were shed when It was pierced by the lance; it is here that it finds its safe refuge when persecuted by its enemies. Here it remains hidden with Jesus Christ in God; more victorious than conquerors, more richly crowned than kings, more brilliant than the sun, higher than the heavens. If you are the disciple of Wisdom, and elect among a thousand, how sweet must be your abandonment, the contempt which men show to you, your poverty, and your seeming captivity, because at a great price you purchase wisdom, and liberty, and the Godhead of the Heart of Jesus Crucified!

"If God had given me no other eyes but those which my parents have given me, I should indeed complain, and be disquieted with all the foolish men and women of this corrupt world; but I take care not to do this. You must know that I look for other troubles, more important and more painful, in order to try our faith and confidence; and to lay the foundations of the Community of Wisdom, not on the shifting sands of gold and silver, which the world makes use of daily for the foundations and enrichment of its establishments, nor, again, upon the arm of flesh, which, at its best, however powerful it may be, is but a handful of straw, but upon the very Wisdom of the Cross of

Calvary. It has been stained, the divine and adorable Cross, it has been stained and empurpled with the Blood of God; it has been chosen, out of all created things, to be the sole spouse of His Heart, the sole object of His desires, the sole centre of all His designs, the sole end of His labours, the sole weapon of His arm, the sole sceptre of His empire, the sole crown of His glory, and the sole companion of His judgment; and yet, O incomprehensible decree of God! this cross has been cast down with contempt and horror, hidden and forgotten in the earth for four hundred years! My dear daughters, apply what I have said to your own actual state. I bear you about in my heart wherever I go, even to the holy altar. I will never forget you, provided that you love my dear cross in which I am united to you, as long as you do not your own will, but the holy Will of God, in which I am,

"Ever yours."

CHAPTER X.

MONTFORT'S LABOURS FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM AT LA ROCHELLE, IN 1715, TO HIS DEATH IN 1716.

The mission of Fontenay began on the 25th of August, the feast of St. Louis, patron of the diocese of La Rochelle. The church of Saint-Jean, in which it was given, not being large enough to contain all those who were desirous of following the exercises, Montfort resolved to give two missions in succession, one for the women,

and the other for the men. The former was rendered remarkable by an event, which at the time made much noise. The commander of the garrison having gone one evening to the sermon, behaved in the most scandalous manner. Montfort, who did not know him, and who, even if he had known him, could not have beheld such conduct with indifference, begged of him to behave himself better or to go away. This advice was very badly received, and, upon the entreaties of the missionary being repeated, the officer broke out into frightful oaths, and so far forgot himself, as brutally to strike the holy priest, and even to threaten to run his sword through his body. The women uttered a cry of terror; whilst, for his part, the commander ordered the soldiers to the church, and it was feared that great excesses might take place. However, the officer himself withdrew, and tried to be beforehand with Montfort in the justification of his own conduct, by laying the whole disorder to his charge; but the matter, which was carried first of all to court, and then referred to the tribunal of the Bishop of La Rochelle, was decided, as it deserved to be, in favour of the holy missionary.

The only relaxation which he allowed himself, after the two missions of Fontenay, was a little journey to his hermitage of Vouvant. He returned almost immediately, to give a retreat to the nuns of Nôtre Dame de Fontenay, with which is connected an event of great importance, namely, the vocation of M. Mulot, who, after the death of Montfort, became superior-general of the Company of Mary. Although belonging to Fontenay, he was titular-vicaire of Soullans, in the diocese of Luçon; but at the time of which we speak, he had retired to Saint-Pompain, in the diocese of La Rochelle, to the house of his brother the Curé

of the parish, in order to try and re-establish his health, which for a long time past had completely broken down. His brother sent him to Fontenay, to beg the holy missionary to come and employ his zeal at Saint-Pompain. M. Mulot found him engaged in giving a retreat to the nuns of Nôtre-Dame, and delivered his message; but Montfort excused himself on the ground that he had several other engagements. However, as M. Mulot continued to press him, he said: "Well, then, promise me to labour with me for the rest of your days, and to come and make your first trial at this mission, which I am going to give at Vouvant. If you consent to this, then I will consent to go afterwards to Saint-Pompain, but not otherwise." M. Mulot replied, "that he would be happy to follow him in his labours, but that the weakness of his health rendered it absolutely impossible." "Fear not," added the man of God, "your illness will pass away, as soon as you begin to labour for the salvation of souls." M. Mulot then felt himself, as it were, inspired to obey, and full of confidence in Montfort's words, he considered it his duty to accompany him to Vouvant. And, indeed, his strength so greatly increased, when he began to work, that he was able to follow him and labour with him until his death.

After the mission of Vouvant, the principal result of which was for the apostolic man, an abundant harvest of persecutions and crosses, he went, towards the middle of December, to begin the mission of Saint-Pompain, which was more consoling to his zeal. It commenced with the public reconciliation of certain of the most important persons in the parish. Every one had desired this reconciliation; but after the bishop had himself failed in this endeavour, it had seemed beyond all hope. This first success was followed

by many others; the whole parish was stirred, and the Curé himself, whose conduct, although not irregular, was not quite what it ought to be, was converted in the most edifying manner. We shall have occasion elsewhere to relate how this conversion was brought about.

At the close of the mission of Saint-Pompain, a new mission was begun at Villiers-en-Plaine, which is about a league distant from Saint-Pompain, Montfort, in order to show the respect which is due to the Word of God, went there in procession, carrying solemnly, under a canopy, a richly bound copy of the Holy Bible. At the erection of the cross, which took place on the occasion of the "Forty-Hours," a gentleman and lady, strangers in the parish, and who doubtless were somewhat under the influence of the dissipation of the carnival, had the insolence to interrupt the missionary in the middle of his sermon, with the most insulting remarks. Montfort listened to them with his head uncovered, his hands joined, and with a modesty with which the whole audience were astonished. When they had ceased speaking, he came down from the pulpit, threw himself upon his knees, and asked pardon, aloud, of the persons who had insulted him, for whatever he might have said or done to cause them to offend God in this manner. At this conduct of the missionary, they were both covered with shame, and retired without saying a word.

"Some days afterwards," says Mdame. d' Orion, the wife of the Seigneur de Villiers, "M. de Montfort happened to be at the castle, our country seat. Seeing the company which had assembled in one of the courts, he had retired into the garden, where a servant half opened the door, and immediately shut it again. A moment afterwards he again opened it, seemed to look at something very

attentively, and having again shut the door, retired into the stable. I had observed this, as well as the look of astonishment which had appeared on his face. When the company had retired, and M. de Montfort had himself left the garden, I went in search of this servant; I found him seated on a box, with his arms crossed, and as if he had lost all power over himself. He told me that he was in great fear; that he had seen M. de Montfort on his knees, with his arms extended in the form of a cross, in the avenue of elms, opposite the garden door, and that he was raised more than two feet above the ground; that he could not understand how a man could kneel, and not touch the ground; but he thought that he had made a mistake the first time, but that he had looked a second time, and that he was now quite sure that he had not been deceived, because he had seen him the second time as well as the first." This same lady, who had been one of the conquests of the mission, also assures us, that on leaving her, the holy missionary said to her in reply to something which she had recommended to his prayers: "Vive Dieu! Madame, I will ask God for it with so many vigils, fasts, and prayers, that He will grant it to me, and I shall die before the year is ended. Bear in mind what I have promised you." It was then the end of January 1716.

Whether he foresaw the near approach of death from his growing weakness, or from supernatural knowledge, it is certain that he now busied himself more than ever in securing those who were to succeed him. He wrote for this purpose to the seminary of Saint-Esprit, at Paris. But, persuaded that so great a matter could only succeed under the patronage of the Queen of Heaven, it was to her, above all, that he turned. He therefore resolved to go in pilgrimage to Notre-Dame-

des-Ardilliers, at Saumur, and he persuaded several persons to make the same journey, with the same intention. Thirty-three men of Saint-Pompain, whom he had formed into a Confraternity of Penitents, offered themselves for the good work, and he accepted their offer. He even wished them to set off before him, in order that he might make the journey by himself, after having prepared for it by a retreat and by fasting and prayer. Lest, however, the pilgrimage might degenerate into a journey of amusement and dissipation, he took the wise precaution to place MM. Vatel and Mulot, the two first priests of his Company of Mary, at the head of the pilgrims. It was to be their duty to see that everything was carried out in as edifying a way as possible. He even gave them written regulations, which we gladly lay before our readers. Although written for better days than ours, they may be useful to those who may wish to make similar pilgrimages, and they furnish an example of Montfort's prudence in other regulations of the kind. It is as follows:

"THE HOLY PILGRIMAGE OF NOTRE-DAME DE SAUMUR, MADE BY PENITENTS, TO OBTAIN FROM GOD THE BLESSING OF GOOD MISSIONARIES.

"1. You will have no other object in this pilgrimage, but to obtain of God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, good missionaries for His people, who may walk in the footsteps of the apostles, by an entire abandonment to His Divine Providence, and by the practice of every kind of virtue under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and who may be endowed with wisdom from above to know and relish, and practise vir-

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tue, and to cause it to be relished and practised by others.

"2. You will not be distinguished from others by your dress, but by a great modesty, religious silence, and continual prayer during the whole course of your journey. You may however, without being too singular, have a rosary in your hands, and a crucifix on your breasts, in order to show that it is not a journey which you are making, but a pilgrimage.

"3. Whilst passing through the villages and towns you will go two and two, for greater edification. In the country you will walk altogether, and will not separate except out of obedience or necessity. If any of you, from weariness or some other cause, stop behind, the others, out of charity, will wait for him, or even, if necessary, place him on horseback, giving help one to the other, as members of one body.

"4. Whilst walking along the pilgrims will sing hymns, or recite the rosary, or pray in silence. They will only speak for one hour in the morning, about ten o'clock, and for one hour in the afternoon, from one to two.

"5. The following is the order to be observed: i. They will all go to bed, if possible, in the same inn; the more penitential on hay and straw, and the weak on beds, but always in silence and with much modesty, after evening prayer in common. ii. They will rise at daybreak at the first signal given by the superior, and will recite a short prayer, viz., a *Pater*, *Ave*, and *Credo*, together with the commandments of God and of the Church. iii. If there be a church in the place where they have slept, and there be no need for going far out of their way to visit it, they will go to the door of the church and adore the Blessed Sacrament, by singing in Its honour the *Tantum Ergo*, with the

appropriate prayer. iv. On setting out for the day, they will first of all sing or say the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin; they will then observe silence for half-an-hour, and meditate upon the death and passion of Jesus Christ. v. After meditation they will recite in two choirs the first chaplet, and the better to say it, they will try to arrange themselves two and two, or four and four, if the weather and road permit of it. vi. After the recital of the chaplet they will sing hymns for about an hour. vii. At a signal from the superior they will converse together on pious subjects till dinner, and on entering the town or village they will sing hymns. viii. If in the place where they dine there be a church in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, they will pay a visit before going to the inn. At the inn, they will all go up, if possible, into an upper room, or keep altogether in the lower room. There, kneeling down, they will sing the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and say one *Ave Maria*, after which they will sit down to table. ix. One of the company, after having said the *Benedicite* aloud, will read to them while eating, for a short time, out of some pious book, to which they will listen in silence. After the reading, they may speak for the rest of the repast, and they will finish at a sign given by the superior, whom they will obey in honour of Jesus Christ. x. Before leaving the inn, they will sing the hymn, "Mère de Dieu, vous êtes nôtre mère," with the other hymn, "Daignez rendre, Seigneur, à tous nos bienfaiteurs." After which they will say an *Ave*. xi. For some time after dinner they will recreate themselves in a holy manner whilst they walk along, and afterwards recite the second chaplet in two choirs; they will next sing hymns for an hour, observe silence for half-an-hour, and then converse together

upon pious subjects until they arrive at their sleeping place. xii. On their arrival, whilst the person appointed for the purpose is preparing the repast, they will recite in two choirs the third chaplet, for the edification of those who may see and hear them; lastly, they will sup, and then retire, as has been above mentioned.

"6. They will endeavour to fast every day during their journey, unless prevented by sickness.

"7. They will not separate from the company, nor undertake anything extraordinary without the permission and consent of the leader and superior whom they have chosen for their pilgrimage, in order that they may be sanctified by obedience, more even than by penance.

"8. A quarter of an hour before entering the town of Saumur, they may take off their shoes, and enter in this manner two and two, singing hymns, to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin. If they arrive in the morning, they will cease singing at the door of the chapel, and when the masses are finished, or when the office is not being sung; if in the evening, the superior will go and ask permission of the sacristan to recite the chaplet before the image of the Blessed Virgin, and to sing a few hymns. If this permission be refused, they will content themselves with praying to God in silence in the above-mentioned chapel, until the signal is given to leave by the superior. No one will go out except for motives of necessity, and by permission, in order to combat and subdue all together the enemies of God, the world, the devil, and the flesh, who will not fail to unite their strength for the purpose of separating or ruining some one of the company.

"9. They will all confess and communicate at

least once, all together in the chapel of our Lady, at ten o'clock, on the morning after their arrival. They will remain for the rest of the day at Saumur, not for the purpose of seeing the town, after the manner of the curious, but in order to thank and pray to God, like good penitents.

"10. They will set out the morning after their communion, after having heard mass, at which they may again communicate, if they have not committed any grave sin since their last communion, and if they have been faithful in the observance of their rule, and in obedience to the superiors.

"11. They may be permitted to go, once only, by the leave of the superiors, to the vendors of rosaries, in order to make purchases. They will then return to their inn, without going anywhere else.

"12. On the morning after their communion, after having heard mass, and prayed for half an hour, they will leave the town of Saumur, two and two, singing hymns, without troubling themselves about the raillery of bad men, to whom they will make no other reply but by their modesty, their silence, and their songs of divine joy.

"13. If they make the journey in this manner, I am persuaded that they will be a spectacle worthy of God, of the angels, and of men, and that they will obtain from God, through His holy Mother, great graces not only for themselves, but also for the whole Church of God.

"14. It will be well for them not to speak of the missionaries who have given them these rules. This secrecy is asked of them, in order that God alone may be glorified, since He alone has been the Author of this design, and He alone will be its reward.

"15. On their return, they will give an account

of all the crosses which they have had to bear, and of the principal things which happened to them, in order that a solemn mass of thanksgiving may be said for them."

This rule was faithfully observed. The thirty-three penitents, as well as the two missionaries, made the journey on foot, and often barefoot. Along the whole road, they were an object of edification. The people ran together in admiration to see them pass, nor did the holy company return without having drawn down both upon themselves, and upon Montfort's plan, the most abundant blessings.

During the absence of the pilgrims of Saint-Pompain, which lasted seven days, Montfort prepared himself by retreat to make the same pilgrimage. Immediately after their return, he set out, accompanied by some brothers, and with the fervour of a man, who, feeling himself near to death, was desirous of obtaining a signal grace from God. Arrived at Saumur, in the chapel, and, as it were, in the presence of that Queen of Heaven, whom from his infancy he had loved, and whom he had preached all his life, he felt himself penetrated with quite a new reverence for her, and recommended to her, with the most lively confidence, both himself and his two societies. He soon tore himself away from this place so dear to his heart, in order to go and give a mission at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where he arrived on the first of April, 1716. He chose for his dwelling-place a little garret, where, for a bed, he had only a little straw, and for furniture, his instruments of penance. M. Mulot came to join him, but M. Vatel was obliged to remain at Saint-Pompain, to recover a little from his fatigue. The mission of Saint-Laurent began on the following Sunday. At the procession which was made in the church

before mass, Montfort wished to carry the cross himself, and it was easy to see, from the way in which he carried it, how happy he esteemed himself of being able to give to the cross this proof of his reverence and love.

Towards the middle of the mission, he learnt that the Bishop of La Rochelle was coming before long to make the visitation of the parish. His veneration for all bishops, and his own affection for Mgr. de Champfleur, made him desirous of preparing for the holy prelate a reception worthy of his high dignity. For this purpose he took so much care and trouble, that his health already broken down, could hold out no longer; he was attacked by pleurisy. The illness was so violent, on the day of the feast, that he was unable to meet the prelate at the dinner given by the Curé. As, however, he had to preach in the afternoon, and fearing that his silence on this occasion might injure the success of his ministry, he thought himself bound to make a last effort. He took for the subject of his discourse the sweetness of Jesus. One might have almost thought that it was our Saviour Himself, at the end of His supper, bidding farewell to His apostles. His voice and action became so animated, he treated the subject in so touching a way, above all, he painted in such tender terms the sweetness of Jesus towards Judas, that there was not one of those who heard him, who was not moved to tears. On leaving the pulpit, the preacher was obliged to lay himself upon his bed. The remedies which were thought necessary, were given him, but all was useless, the illness was mortal, and he himself was ripe for heaven. He lay, as he was wont, upon straw; but, his illness increasing every day, he consented, through obedience, to take a mattress, and it was

thus that he received with sentiments of great piety the last Sacraments of the Church.

M. Mulot having mentioned to him, with tears in his eyes, the loss which the missions would sustain at his death; he said to him, pressing his hand: "Have confidence, my son, have confidence; I will pray to God for you, I will pray to God for you." These words, according to the testimony of M. Mulot, were the means of working a true miracle. It was thus that he was in the habit of speaking of the change which took place in himself, shortly afterwards, and which rendered him capable of bearing for many years, all the fatigues of the apostolic ministry.

On the 27th of April, the sick man, feeling his end approaching, made his will, which we give in all its simplicity.

"I, the undersigned, the greatest of sinners, desire that my body be placed in the cemetery, and my heart under the pavement in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin.

"I place in the hands of Mgr., the Bishop of La Rochelle, and M. Mulot, the little furniture and mission books which belong to me, in order that they may be preserved for the use of my poor brothers, united with me in obedience and poverty; to wit, Brother Nicolas of Poitiers; Brother Philippe of Nantes; Brother Louis of La Rochelle; and Brother Gabriel, who is at present with me, so long as they shall persevere in renewing their vows every year; also, for the use of those whom the providence of God may call to the same community of the Holy Ghost. I give all my Calvary statues, together with the cross, to the house of the Sisters of the Incurables at Nantes. I have no money belonging to me in particular; but there are 135 livres which belong to Nicolas of Poitiers. M. Mulot will give ten crowns out of the common

fund to Jacques, ten others to Jean, and ten to Mathurin, should they wish to go away, and not to make the vow of poverty and obedience. If anything remain in the common fund, M. Mulot will make use of it, like a good father, for the benefit of the brothers, and for his own benefit. As the house at La Rochelle will return to the natural heirs there will only remain for the Community of the Holy Ghost, the house at Vouvant, given by contract by M. de la Brulerie, the conditions of which M. Mulot will fulfil; the two "boisselées" of land given by Madame La Lieutenante de Vouvant, and a little house given by a good woman, on condition that if there be no means for building another house upon its site, it shall be used by the Brothers of the Community of the Holy Ghost, as a school for the poor.

"I give three of my banners to Nôtre Dame de Sainte Patience at La Seguiniére, four others to Nôtre Dame de la Victoire at La Garnache; and to each parish of L'Aunis in which the rosary is still kept up, one of the banners of the Holy Rosary. I give to M. Bonny the six volumes of Sermons de la Volpilière, and to M. Clisson the four volumes of the Catechismes des Peuples de la Campagne. If anything be owing to the printer, it shall be paid out of the common fund; should anything still remain, M. Vatel must receive back what belongs to him, if Monsigneur approves of it. This is my last will, which M. Mulot will execute with the full powers which I give him of disposing, as may seem good to him, in favour of the Community of the Holy Ghost, of the chasubles, chalices, and Church and mission ornaments.

"Executed during the mission of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, this 27th day of April, 1716.

After giving these last orders, the holy priest gave all his thoughts to death. He asked that the little chains which he had been in the habit of wearing might be allowed to remain on his neck and arms and feet, as he wished to die, as he had lived, a slave of Jesus in Mary. In his right hand he held the crucifix to which the Pope had attached a plenary indulgence, and in the left the little statue of the Blessed Virgin which he was in the habit of always carrying about him. His eyes were constantly fixed upon these images, and he kissed them by turns, calling upon the names of Jesus and of Mary. A great number of persons had assembled at the door of his room, and asked to see him for the last time. The missionary wished that they should be allowed to enter. They all fell upon their knees, sobbing bitterly, and asked for his blessing. The man of God refused, alleging that he was too great a sinner. But M. Mulot having told him to bless them with his crucifix, so that it might be Jesus Christ, and not he himself, who blessed them, he consented to do so in this manner. His room was too small to contain all those who were desirous of the same privilege, and it had to be cleared and filled again three times in succession before their wishes could be satisfied. At the sight of the people shedding tears, the holy missionary collected all his strength in order to inspire them with the sentiments with which he was himself penetrated, and sang the following couplet of one of his hymns :

"Allons, mes chers amis,
Allons en Paradis;
Quoi qu'on gagne en ces lieux,
Le Paradis vaut mieux."*

A moment afterwards he fell back in a sort of lethargy; then, waking up and trembling all over, he said in a loud voice, "It is in vain that you attack me: I am between Jesus and Mary..... *Deo gratias et Mariæ.* I have finished my course. It is over now, and I shall never sin again."

He gently breathed his last at eight o'clock in the evening of Tuesday, the 28th of April, 1716, at the age of forty-three years, two months, and twenty-eight days.

* "On, on, my friends, to Paradise,
God's Paradise on high!
Whatever be our gain on earth,
'Tis surer gain to die."

BOOK V.

GENERAL SKETCH OF DE MONTFORT.—HIS GLORY.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL SKETCH OF DE MONTFORT.

In height Montfort was above the average; his constitution was strong and robust, but weakened by fatigues and his continual austerities. His hair was of a chestnut brown, worn short; his face long, his forehead broad and elevated, his nose aquiline, his complexion fresh coloured, his eyes large and expressive, but at the same time very modest. His whole appearance had a look of nobleness and goodness, but his manners were extremely simple, and his exterior so often neglected, that he was sometimes reproached for not paying sufficient regard to other persons, and for showing too little consideration to their self-love and nicety. These singularities, as we have elsewhere remarked, entered somewhat into his character; but they sprung still more from the thoughts which habitually governed his soul. If we picture to ourselves a man firmly persuaded that greatness consists in abasement, happiness in tears, riches in poverty; a man who has no other code of laws but the Gospel, no other model but the God of Bethlehem and Calvary; how can we wonder that such a man, endowed in other

respects with simplicity of soul, incapable of calculation or dissimulation, should in his exterior be somewhat extraordinary? However, in the opinion of persons of good judgment who had the opportunity of seeing Montfort more closely, the sweetness of his conversation, the goodness of his heart, the elevation of his thoughts, the solidity of his judgment, and, more than all, the holiness of his life, soon effaced the unfavourable impression which at first sight might have been produced.

From the exterior of Montfort let us penetrate into his interior. He gave, as we have seen, from the time of his studies at Rennes and Paris, striking proofs of an upright and penetrating mind; his imagination vividly represented to him objects in all their different lights, and enabled him to paint them in true and picturesque colours. To this was due a natural eloquence, which left his audience neither time nor courage to criticize either negligence or unevenness; to this also must be ascribed his remarkable taste for singing, painting, poetry, in a word for all that can give greater expression to the soul or supply it with more energetic language. To these natural talents Montfort joined a very extended acquaintance with every part of the holy ministry. Of this the course of his history offers several proofs; but a proof worth all the rest is to be found in the fact that his enemies were always unable to reproach him with any error in doctrine, or any excess either of laxity or of rigour in his guidance of souls. As for his natural inclinations, he had mortified them so well from his very infancy, that had he not himself informed his friends of the fact, no one would have suspected him to have been born with a passionate and violent temper.

His supernatural qualities, that is to say, his Christian and ecclesiastical virtues far surpassed

even his natural qualities. His whole life was but a series of heroic actions which, when found together in mutual support, make up extraordinary sanctity in the true sense of the word. Let us now consider in succession his feelings and conduct towards God, his neighbour, and himself.

There are four chief virtues which unite us directly with God, faith, hope, charity, and religion. Montfort's actions had for their principle a lively faith. It was this which made him undertake so many journeys, so many labours for the relief of the needy and for the conversion of sinners; it was this which made him place all his happiness in poverty, suffering, and humiliation. This active faith, which was truly the real life of this just man, this faith which in him went so far as to work miracles, was at the same time as simple and submissive as that of a child, and the decisions of the Holy Apostolic See were to him dearer than his life. We have seen how much his opposition to the errors of his own day, which had been condemned, had cost him in the way of humiliations and contradictions. He did not approve of the priests who shared his labours making subtle questions, and making use in their sermons of too high arguments. He begged of them to preach in a simple and natural manner, and to dwell, after the example of the apostles, upon the mysteries of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Saviour.

Montfort's faith did not allow him to see any other true good except God Himself. Thus God alone was the object of his desires and hopes. It was after Him that he sighed, upon Him alone that he leaned. His confidence in God's Providence knew no limits, and nothing could trouble him; never did a child sleep more tranquilly upon his mother's breast than he upon the bosom

of God. Faithful in following the counsel of our Lord, who recommends us to take no heed for the morrow, he took no thought about it, and he often loved to repeat that word of the Psalmist: "The Lord ruleth me, I shall want nothing."* He would have feared that God might abandon him, had he himself appeared to distrust Him, by taking human precautions. We have seen him, when setting out on a long journey, despoil himself of what little money he had with as much eagerness as others would have shown in providing what was necessary for the expenses of the journey. The vow of poverty which kept him in continual dependance upon Providence was in his eyes the safest patrimony. All his missions were absolutely gratuitous, and he has left it as an obligation to his successors to observe the same disinterested rule. The house which he inhabited, together with the persons who shared his labours, he called the "*House of Providence*," in order that every one might understand that he wished to owe everything to charity. Almighty God, however, after having for some time made trial of his confidence, was not in general slow in rewarding him in so liberal a manner that he had enough to provide, not only for the wants of the mission, but also for a large number of poor.

"As it was ordinarily my duty," says M. des Bastières, "to serve the poor at table, it happened five or six times that I had not a morsel of bread to give them, and that there was even none in the House of Providence, in which the missionaries lodged. On the first occasion I gave notice of this to M. de Montfort, who did not seem at all embarrassed, and simply told me to

* This is the man, whom men, even Catholics, have accused of idolatry.—*Tr.*

take them to the accustomed place, and that God would provide for their wants. I executed his orders, not knowing from whence bread could come to us, except from heaven; however, I made them sit down to table, having nothing to place before them, at which I felt very mortified, because there were nearly two hundred persons present, who were waiting to see the poor people fed, who were very hungry. Meanwhile, I had a book read to them for a short time, during which I went into the House of Providence, where I was much astonished to find a large quantity of bread and other provisions, which had come I knew not from where. I carried them immediately to our poor people, who that day had double portions. A similar event occurred five or six other times to my knowledge." Many other facts of a like nature would prove, were there any need for it, that the more perfect Montfort's confidence in Providence, the more marvellous was the care of Providence with regard to him.

The words "God Alone" were familiar to his lips, and his hand loved to place them as a seal at the foot of his writings, because they were graven on his heart, and summed up, so to speak, his whole soul. As he saw nothing but God, so also he loved God Alone. At the head of all his letters he thus expressed this noble longing of his soul: "May the pure love of God reign in our hearts!" A powerful grace had from his infancy drawn him towards God, and this attraction, growing stronger day by day, had grown so strong from the time of his leaving the seminary, as almost not to allow him to lose sight of the Presence of God. Out of respect for God, everywhere present, he was in the habit of walking with his head uncovered, even on his travels, notwithstanding the heat of the sun, or the severity

of the cold; sometimes, when he thought that he was not perceived, he would prostrate himself in the middle of the road, with his face upon the ground, as if to confound himself in the dust, in the presence of his sovereign King.* His life was a continual prayer, which did not however prevent him, even in the midst of his most important occupations, from specially consecrating to this holy exercise, several hours of the day and night. It was sometimes easy to divine what was passing in his soul, from the transports of love which betrayed its secrets, from the tears which bathed his face, and from the light which seemed to spring forth from his forehead. At other times, more tranquil, one would have said that he slept, like another John, on the heart of the Beloved; and if afterwards asked what he had experienced in this mystic sleep, he would reply: "I was *between Jesus and Mary;* I thought that they *were in my heart, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left;* and I was trying to show them my gratitude for the visit they had paid me." On coming out of his prayer, his words were burning, and breathed nothing but fire. "O," he said, "what misfortune! God is not loved because He is not known. Ah, sinner! ah, sinner! if thou didst but know how good God is, and how loving, thou wouldst never sin again. The greatest of misfortunes is not to know Thee, O my God, and the greatest of punishments is not to love Thee. O my sweet Jesus, grant that I may ever love Thee more and more!" That, with such sentiments in his heart, he should have laboured with his whole strength to prevent or repair the outrages made by sin against the Divine Majesty, is only what we might have easily

* And this was an idolator?—*Tr.*

supposed, even if his whole history were not there to bear witness to the fact. But, if he was desirous, at the price of his blood, that God should reign in others, much more was he desirous that He should begin by reigning sovereign over himself. The least sign of God's good pleasure was infinitely dearer to him than the whole world, and he wept only for the sin which opposes itself to His Holy Will. Friends, and even his parents, when God took them from him, received from him no other farewell but these words of resignation, "Blessed be God!" "One day," says M. des Bastières, "he received a letter while we were at dinner. After having read it, he raised his eyes to heaven, and pronounced those words of Job, 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' I begged of him to inform me of the news which he had just received, and he said to me: 'It is about the death of my father whom I recommend to your prayers.' He then went on with his dinner, without giving any further sign of sorrow. I asked him the next morning why he had appeared so insensible to the death of his father. He replied that 'Venial sin was a greater evil than the destruction of the whole universe; that it was of more importance to weep for sin than for the loss of his parents, because it was useless and even dangerous to oppose the will of God.'" The most cruel sorrows, the most dangerous illnesses, the most unjust persecutions, the most painful contradictions, all seemed to be blunted against the impenetrable buckler of his conformity to the good will of God. However little we reflect on the circumstances which attended the construction and taking down of the Calvary of Pontchâteau, we shall still be able to understand how full of bitterness this event must have been, we will not

say to a soul desirous of its own glory, but even to the heart of an apostle. "On the first visit which I paid to him after this misfortune," says M. des Bastières, "I expected to find him oppressed with grief; I was prepared to do all in my power to console him, but I was greatly surprised when I found him gayer and more contented than I was myself. I said to him, smiling, 'You are indeed playing the strong-minded and generous man; unless you are merely affecting to do so.' 'I am neither strong nor courageous,' he replied, 'but, thank God, I am neither in trouble nor in grief; I am content.' 'You are quite satisfied, then,' I remarked, 'that they should destroy your Calvary?' 'I am neither satisfied nor troubled,' he answered, 'our Lord permitted me to erect it, and now He permits it to be destroyed, blessed be His Holy Name! If the matter depended upon me it should last as long as the world; but as it depends immediately upon God, may His will be done and not mine! I would rather die, O my God, a thousand times,' he exclaimed, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, 'than ever oppose Thy holy will.'"

Out of divine charity flows the virtue of religion. We have already seen Montfort's special devotion to the sacrament of the holy Eucharist, the principal object, and, as it were, the centre of religion. Every day he ascended the holy altar, devoted half an hour to saying mass, and never failed to perform this action, above all others, with seraphic piety. Often did his abundant tears testify to the emotion of his soul; sometimes he was ravished out of himself. Whenever he had to decide any important matter, it was at the foot of the sacred tabernacle that he would take counsel, and sometimes pass whole nights. On his arrival in a parish to join a mission, his first visit was to our

Lord, before whom he often remained more than an hour in meditation. He never passed before a church without at least genuflecting, and if the time allowed him, he would adore for an instant upon both knees. During the course of every mission, he never failed to make a public reparation to the Blessed Sacrament, with a rope round his neck and a torch in his hand, and, on such occasions, he would preach with a force and emotion, that only a heart of brass could have resisted. At the end of the mission he was in the habit of making a general procession, in which our Lord was carried, as it were, in triumph; nothing could have been more devotional or better arranged. Whatever related to the Holy Sacrifice, seemed, in his eyes, great and venerable. All irreverence in church pierced his heart, and filled him with the zeal of Phinees. There is no need to repeat here what we have already related of so many churches and chapels, which he caused to be rebuilt and decorated; this was one of his chief cares wherever he gave a mission. Perhaps he never gave a single mission without leaving behind some memorial of his zeal for the decoration of the house of God, and for the beautifying of everything connected with the majesty of God's service, either by procuring more suitable tabernacles and paintings for the altar, or by furnishing linen vestments and ornaments for the sacristy. For this purpose, he had with him during his mission, a painter and sculptor, who worked under his direction, and his free moments were spent in making the church as neat and clean as was possible. The same love which he bore to the Blessed Sacrament, caused him to erect, whenever he could, confraternities in its honour.

After Jesus, His holy Mother was the chief object of Montfort's filial love. There are few

pages of his history which do not give some new proof of this devotion. How could it have been otherwise? Mary was so present in his soul, so profoundly graven upon his heart, that, after God, he could neither move nor act except in her, by her, and for her, as he himself one day told a lady in his confidence. Every day he recited the whole rosary, and several other prayers in honour of Mary; we are even assured that he was in the habit of saluting her three hundred times a day, and each time by some new title of respect and love. He was never without a little statue of the Mother of God: he had it always in his hand or before him, and from time to time he would kiss it with quite childlike tenderness. At the foot of almost all his letters, he added to his name, "the unworthy servant of Mary," or, "the slave of Jesus in Mary." He composed, in three days, a little treatise on the advantages of this slavery, of which some passages may be found at the end of this life, and in which sentiments of lively devotion are expressed with rare exactness of doctrine.* He loved to proclaim the graces which he recognised as due to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. "When shall it be, O my good Mother, that I shall have the consolation to see thee, no longer in figure, but in reality! I alone owe more to thee, than the whole world; long since I should have been lost but for thee!" Feeling the whole value of this devotion, there was nothing he would not do to communicate it to all around him, whether by the establishment of confraternities, or by the decoration of altars and chapels, or by the preaching of the holy rosary, and the glorious prerogatives of Mary. "Tell my brother Joseph,"

* The whole of this treatise will be found at the end of this work. (Tr.)

he wrote to his uncle at Rennes, "that I beg of him to study hard, and to become one of the best in his class; and for this purpose let him place his studies in the hands of his good Mother, the most holy Virgin; let him also continue to pay her his little services, she will know well how to give him what is needful for him. I recommend the same thing to my sister."

A man like Montfort, so full of the virtues which unite men with God, could hardly fail to feel in like manner that love for his neighbour which our Lord has placed side by side with the love of God Himself. He had a great reverence for the dead, and everywhere paid great attention to the decent maintenance of the cemeteries, where their ashes reposed. But he busied himself still more in procuring for their souls the refreshment of which they stood in need. At the end of each mission he celebrated a solemn service for the dead of the parish, and three times a week he offered the holy sacrifice for all the faithful departed. On these days, all his devotions and practices of piety were offered with this intention; to his usual mortifications he added fresh ones, and to his accustomed prayers, the Office of the Dead, and the Penitential Psalms. The living, as well as the dead, were the objects of Montfort's affectionate devotion. What has he not done, what would he not have been willing to do for the conversion of sinners? Wherever we follow him, we shall always see him either preparing for, or giving himself up to the ministry for the salvation of souls. All the thoughts of his mind, all the powers of his body, all the moments of his life, were too few for the desires and ambition of his zeal. Without intending it, he has given us a picture of himself, in the description which he has drawn in one of his hymns, of the zeal of the true missionary. To

gain a hardened sinner, there was no ingenuity which he did not employ, no prayers or mortifications which he did not practice; for instance, he has been known to deprive himself of wine for several days to obtain the conversion of a drunkard; and how many conversions have cost him far more dear? To gain one soul, he would have hurried to the ends of the world. It had ever been his ambition to preach to the heathen. "My heart is penetrated with grief," he sometimes would say to M. des Bastières, "when I think of the almost infinite number of souls which are damned, for want of knowing the true God, and the Christian religion; if we ourselves had either faith or charity, we should not hesitate a moment to set out for their deliverance. How fortunate are they, who have the happiness of labouring in so divine an employment! They are doing what our Lord did of old, what the holy apostles have done in accordance with His example, and what a great number of generous and saintly missionaries are still doing at the present day. It is my sins," he said, and sighed, "which render me unworthy of so great a favour. I shall never die content, unless I expire at the foot of a tree, like the incomparable missionary of Japan, St. Francis Xavier." If Montfort's love for his neighbour extended to all mankind, he was also distinguished by a remarkable compassion for the poor; not only did he cherish them as his children and brothers, but he honoured them as his lords and masters. Whenever he met them in the street, he saluted them, nor would he address them until he had first taken off his hat. Whilst taking his meals, should he not happen to see any poor man with whom to share them, he would leave the table, and say, "I am going to look for our good Jesus." And then he would find some

poor wretch, whom he would place at his right hand, and wait upon with the greatest respect, and with the affection of a mother. He often drank out of the same glass as the poor man, and eat what he had left, however disgusting it might be. It happened more than once, on his journeys, that he carried the loads of the poor people he met with, and even themselves, if they were crippled. If they happened to be hideous and full of ulcers, he embraced them with delight, and deprived himself for their sakes, even of necessaries; he went so far as to change his underclothes with theirs, although sometimes they were tattered and so dirty, as to prove revolting even to the least delicate and susceptible. He was often seen to cut the hair of those who had the ringworm, remove their filth, and by the great care he took of them, to ultimately cure them. That which for any other person would have been excessively repugnant, and often contagious, in his case offered neither disgust nor danger. And, indeed, his history is full of all kinds of proofs of his charity to the poor, and this charity he still continues to practise after his death, by the hands of his admirable daughters, to whom he has bequeathed his spirit.

Montfort's heart, so full of love towards God and his brethren, had for himself nothing but contempt and hatred. M. des Bastières, who had known him so intimately, is inexhaustible when he speaks of his humility; he relates a number of proofs. To submit, without reply, to the severest orders of his superiors, to seek for the company of the humble and poor, to take counsel in every matter, and to prefer the advice even of his inferior to his own; to believe himself, in a word, to be the greatest sinner in the world, and, consequently, to seem to merit every kind of contempt; this is

what we meet with in every page of Montfort's history. He was not ashamed either to live with the poor, or himself to wear the livery of poverty, and to submit to all its consequences. The thousand and thousand humiliations connected with begging for all sorts of poor, were in no way painful to him; he called them his "private profits." To be to his taste, his dress had to be so worn, and patched, that a beggar would not have picked it up in the road. Had not charitable persons seen to his wants, he would have been covered with tatters. Thus it happened upon one occasion, that a young lady of Nantes, seeing his cassock all torn, made him a present of a new one, of knitted wool, and without seam, which is still preserved with reverence, and the touch of which has produced more than one miraculous cure. As for the rest, Montfort only accepted those gifts of charity which were indispensable for the present moment. If clean linen was given him, he left his own in exchange, not being willing to take it back when it was washed. One day, being without a handkerchief, he knelt down and asked his sister for one. She brought him two, but he took only one, saying that he had no need of the other. He carried his humility so far as to often prostrate himself before his brothers, and to oblige them to place their feet upon his neck. To believe him, he never performed any good, but evil, and always evil. "When he was told," relates M. des Bastières, "that he had many enemies, he replied that he did not know that he had any enemies in the world except those who flattered him, or spoke to his advantage; and that he regarded as his best friends, those who procured for him or gave him good crosses to carry. He was never more content than when he was humbled or insulted, however great the humiliations

might be, which he generally knelt down to receive. He begged of all those who lived with him to reprove him for the least fault, and, above all, not to pardon his graver faults; and he repeated from time to time this humble prayer, which he made in like manner to the Brothers and Missionaries. When I gave him some penances, which had humbled him, he came to thank me on his knees, and begged of me to give him still greater and more humiliating ones; when I gave him light penances, far from being pleased, he said that I was very cruel." And, indeed, in order to crucify his flesh, and to mortify within himself all the desires of nature, he knew how to make up for the leniency of those who seemed to him too indulgent. The innocence of his life, we should have thought, would have taken away his fear. Père de la Tour, who for a long time had been his director, attests that he was always embarrassed for want of matter in absolving him, and that each time he had to recur to his past life in order to find a single venial sin, upon which he could rest the absolution. But the most zealous in the practice of penance, are they not in general those who seem to have the greatest right to be dispensed from it? The fatigues of his journeys, and the labours of his missions, were not enough for Montfort; he often lacerated his body as many as five times a day, by means of a discipline, bristling with iron points. He accompanied this flagellation with the most fervent prayers. "Often," says M. des Bastières, "I have heard him say, while striking himself, 'Lord, if it please Thee, pardon my enemies; lay not to their charge what they do and say against me. Lord, convert all the sinners of this parish; show mercy to all of them; punish me, chastise me, as it may seem good to Thee, I deserve it; but, as for them, in

mercy spare them.' He never failed to give himself the discipline before mounting the pulpit, and he was wont to say, that the cock never crowed so well, as when he had first well beaten himself with his wings. More than once I have found the instrument of his penance all stained with blood. Not content with wearing almost always a cincture of iron round his body, and little chains, also of iron, on his arms and legs; he wore night and day upon his breast a very sharp rasp in the shape of a heart. One day, when he fainted, coming down from the pulpit, this heart was found upon him, and taken from him. When he came to himself, perceiving himself in the arms of one of the bystanders, he pronounced these words of the Canticle of Canticles: "I sleep, and my heart watcheth." Although at all times he rose at four o'clock, he was in the habit of retiring to rest very late, often after eleven o'clock, and then never upon a bed, but on the ground, or on a handful of straw, or, at most, upon a straw mattress. He fasted regularly every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, not to speak of the Sundays and Holydays, in which he generally did not break his fast, until after midday. Even at his repast, he used great ingenuity in mortifying himself. For example, I have seen him several times put wormwood in his soup. For the rest, he paid so little attention to what he took, that once I saw him drink a cup of vinegar and water, and having asked him what he thought of the wine, he replied that he had found it excellent. His greatest joy was to suffer, his greatest grief, not to have an occasion to do so. I have seen him endure the most severe illnesses; in the midst of the most cruel pains, instead of complaining, he would pray to God, or sing hymns. When I asked him how he was, he replied that if he could get up, he would be quite

well; he then spoke to me with as much joy, as if he had been in perfect health. From his earliest years, he had had strong thoughts of leaving his father's house, and of going into some unknown country, in order to live there by begging his bread, until he had become sufficiently strong to gain it by the sweat of his brow. Having asked him which trade he would have chosen, he answered, that he would have preferred the most toilsome, and the commonest to any other. But, indeed, what state of life could ever have offered him so many labours and crosses as he met with in the sublime and heroic career in which he was employed by Providence?

To complete this sketch of Montfort, and to make him known in every respect, we have only to add to what has been already said, in the course of his history, a few details with regard to his manner of giving missions, and the ingenuity which his zeal made use of, in order to perpetuate their advantages. To whatever place he was called to give a mission, he always went on foot. For this purpose we have seen him undertake long journeys. In payment of his labours, he only asked for his daily food, and this he only accepted as an alms. Whatever was given him over and above, and it often amounted to a good deal, he employed in the relief of the poor, who, in all his missions, were the chief objects of his zeal. Great simplicity was his constant companion; any place, any pulpit suited him. If the churches were too small, he preached under the market sheds in the public squares. If he could find no other way of making himself heard by the crowd, he mounted on a heap of stones, or in a tree. We can easily understand how, in such a position, artistically arranged sermons would have been out of place. Hence, the merit of all Montfort's sermons was due to the

solidity of his arguments, to the appropriateness of their details, and not to the arrangement of his words or the elegance of his phrases. He only made use of the simplest expressions, which could be easily understood by every one; but his earnest conviction of the truth of what he said, gave life to his preaching, and rendered it extremely energetic; and if the merit of a preacher, as St. Jerome wrote to Nepotian, must be judged by the tears, and not by the applause, of the audience, then we may place Montfort, without fear of contradiction, in the rank of the most distinguished preachers. Everything, as we have seen, yielded to his eloquence, even prejudices, interests, customs. Men did not think about praising him, but about their own conversion, they wept in spite of themselves, and, so to speak, without perceiving it. All who have spoken of the power of Montfort's preaching, are at a difficulty how to make us understand its marvellous effects. "One word of his mouth," says Père Vincent, a Capuchin, who for a long time had been his companion, "a simple inflexion of his voice, a single gesture, was enough to produce miracles of conversion. As for myself, when I listened to him, I thought I saw an angel. His countenance, all on fire, betrayed the love with which his soul was inflamed. His tongue was but the echo of what the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart; his voice, his gesture, his whole exterior, savoured of his union with his God, and proclaimed that it was Jesus Christ Himself, who spoke by his mouth. One day, seeing several ecclesiastics coming to hear him, some of whom were rather prejudiced against him, he said, "See the humility of those good gentlemen who have come to hear a man like me; it is they who should be in my place, and my place ought to be at their feet." Then, entering into his subject, he spoke

with so much force and unction, that these ecclesiastics could not refrain from crying out with admiration, as the Jews of old had done when hearing our Lord, "*No man ever spake as this Man.*" "Père Martinet, of the Company of Jesus, related to me," says M. Blain, "that having heard of M. de Montfort's great power over the hearts of men, and of the divine art with which he subdued the most rebellious, inflamed the most icy, and softened the hardest hearts, he was curious to hear him. He therefore went to one of his sermons, in company with an ecclesiastic, who had the reputation of being somewhat fastidious and particular. On their arrival at the church, he took care that no tears should escape his eyes; at first he was able to restrain them, and his obedient eyes remained dry; but his heart, whilst listening to M. de Montfort, could not long remain closed to the impressions and darts of fire which he received from his words. Touched to the quick, and penetrated with sentiments of tenderest devotion, he permitted his eyes, almost without perceiving it, to declare what they felt, and to mingle their tears with those of all the people who could not restrain their own. The ecclesiastic, by whom he was accompanied, could not resist any more than himself, and paid, like him, to the holy preacher, that tribute of tears which almost all his hearers were accustomed to pay to him."

When we see how many graces God attached to the ministry of His servant, who would any longer dare to blame the different forms which his truly universal zeal knew how to take, as need might be? Means which might be impracticable in other places at other times, or which, even if employed by other persons, might be without effect, had a marvellous success in Montfort's hands. Moreover, what mattered to him the criticism of the

worldly wise, to him who looked only to the glory of God and the good of souls? Encouraged by the example of M. Le Nobletz, who, in the preceding century, had, as it were, changed the face of Brittany, by speaking to the minds of men, through their eyes, by means of pictures, in which were represented all the great truths of religion; encouraged, more than all, by the example of our Saviour Himself, Who showed Himself lowly with the lowly, Who preached upon a boat, or upon the side of a well, as well as in the temple, and Who took occasion of everything which lay under the eyes of His hearers, to make palpable, as it were, the truths which He announced to them, Montfort, in like manner, made himself all things to all men; he had general instructions for all the faithful; he had special instructions for every class of persons; and he often loved to call sensible objects to his aid, in order the better to fix their attention. Upon one occasion, when preaching to some rich persons, who had assembled together in a room of the presbytery, he began by calling for a needle and a thick cord; and then, having tried in vain to pass the cord through the needle's eye, he took occasion from this to explain the obligation of the rich to make themselves poor and humble in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. On another occasion, he had a great fire lit, near the church, and gathering together a number of little rough, and vagabond children, he warned them in strong terms against theft; and, pointing to the fire, into which none of them dare place his hand, he tried to make them understand that a far more searching fire was in store for thieves for all eternity. The witnesses of these facts are agreed in saying, that they were always accompanied by extraordinary conversions.

These strange means were only employed by

Montfort in certain circumstances, in which they appeared necessary; but there were others, of which he made general use in all his missions. The explanation of the Catechism to little children was the duty which he preferred to all others; to this he devoted his whole attention. Catechisms and sermons, all alike begun by prayer, and ordinarily by the public recitation of a few decades of the rosary, "Because," he said, "grace being attached to prayer, we must dispose men's hearts, by means of it, for the word of God; this heavenly seed having need, no less than that of earth, of being watered by the showers of grace which flow from prayer." The singing of hymns accompanied all the exercises of Montfort's missions. He had himself composed a great number, which are still preserved in his own handwriting.* Some of them, with which he had taken more than ordinary care, leave nothing to be desired with respect to composition; as to the greater part of the others, we see that he thought less of making fine verses than of the best way of teaching souls, by means of rhyme and song, the truths and practices of religion. But all breathe the same spirit of faith; all alike, by their simplicity of language and of tune, were destined to become popular, as indeed several of them have for a long time become throughout a great part of France. In the course of each mission, Montfort was in the habit of making seven different processions; namely, three on the days of general communion, made separately by the women, men, and children; another on the day of the funeral service for all who had died in the parish; another on the renewal of the baptismal vows; another on

* A complete edition of de Montfort's "Cantiques," has recently been published by M. Henri Oudin, Rue de l'Epéron, Poitiers.

the occasion of the erection of the cross; and lastly at the distribution of crosses and monograms of the Holy Name of Jesus, in memory of the mission. These processions were attended, according to the places in which they were held, with several circumstances, some of which at the present day might seem strange, but which all of them produced at the time the happiest effects upon the spectators. Everything, it is true, was done with touching modesty and in admirable order. The holy missionary was not only endowed with an imagination fertile in inventing a thousand means of adding to the pomp of these ceremonies, but he had a special gift, which was truly extraordinary, of regulating their order and march. From the pulpit he would organize, with marvellous ease, a procession of perhaps several thousand persons; a few words from him were sufficient to enable every one to understand his place, and at the first signal they all began to move, as if they had been prepared by long practice. Ten persons would have found much difficulty and trouble in doing what he did without coming down from the pulpit. Ordinarily, the little girls of the catechism class followed the cross; then came the little boys, the women, the men, the virgins; the penitents: all in rank, two and two, or four and four, all carrying in their hands a rosary, a cross, and a *Contract of alliance with God*. Those who had not taken part in the mission were without these emblems of piety, and were not received into the ranks of the procession; they followed in any order they liked. Each class had at its head a particular banner, not to speak of the banner of the parish, and of fifteen standards, glittering with gold, on which Montfort had represented the fifteen mysteries which it is the object of the Rosary to

honour. The contract of alliance with God, which each of the faithful carried in his hand during the processions, was a formula of the promises of baptism, which Montfort had had printed, together with the practices of a Christian life. Each confessor was in the habit of making his penitents renew their promises before giving them absolution. But, in order to give more solemnity to this renewal of vows, which the Sovereign Pontiff had specially recommended to him, the holy missionary made it the particular object of one of the greatest ceremonies of the mission. On the return of the procession in which the Gospel had been carried between two torches, at the head of the clergy, the deacon, stopping at the door of the church, presented the word of God to the persons who formed the ranks of the procession. All of them, in succession, knelt down and kissed it, pronouncing at the same time these words of the contract of alliance: "I firmly believe all the truths of the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ." They then entered the church, and passing before the baptismal font, they kissed it, and pronounced these further words: "I renew, with all my heart, the vows of my baptism, and I renounce for ever the devil, the world, and myself." From there they went to an altar, at which Montfort gave them the foot of his little statue of Mary to kiss, and made them pronounce these other words of the contract: "I give myself wholly to Jesus Christ, by the hands of Mary, to carry my cross after Him all the days of my life." The "Credo" was then intoned, and at its close the missionary addressed a few questions to the deacon. He asked him, for example, which was the one true Church; if it sufficed, in order to be saved, to make an external profession of the Catholic religion; then what was the rule which every Chris-

tian was necessarily bound to observe in order to work out his salvation. To this last question the deacon replied by showing the book of the Gospels: "Behold," he said, "the rule of all Christians: whosoever does not observe all these precepts, together with those of the Church, shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven." He then carried the book to the missionary, who received it on his knees, and holding it on his breast, addressed to the people a few last words, but so touching that every one withdrew with tears in his eyes, and with the firm resolution, to lead for the future a more Christian life.

Lastly, in order to perpetuate the fruits of a mission, Montfort always took care to establish some durable undertaking. That of poor schools for children seemed to him the most indispensable; he himself undertook the charge of procuring masters and mistresses, and he himself regulated with rare talent the manner of holding the classes, and the method of teaching. Another undertaking to which he also attached great value, was that of the public recitation of the Rosary. From the time of St. Dominic, no one has shown more zeal for this devotion. He also loved to establish the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and for this purpose he wished that every person of good will should choose an hour of each week or month, or year. In order to encourage this devotion he had obtained faculties to associate to the good works and indulgences of the Dames du Saint Sacrèment, all the persons who thus undertook to pass an hour in adoration before the holy tabernacle. The confraternities which he established under different titles, especially under those of penitents and virgins, the first for men, the second for young women, contributed also not a

little to preserve the fruits of the missions. They were, as it were, a centre of piety in each parish, for the associates had prudent regulations, some of which have been preserved, and which by procuring them their own sanctification, rendered them, in the midst of the other faithful, the good odour of Jesus Christ. The virgins, whilst preserving the dress and occupations of the world, made, but for one year only, the vow not to marry, a practice of which the history of the Church offers us numerous examples. Precious remains of these confraternities, established by Montfort himself, or by his successors, are still to be found in several places; but, as has been remarked elsewhere, all these private and local associations were unable to prosper for any length of time, or to extend their salutary influence to any distance. We shall see in the next book of this history how effectually Montfort has perpetuated his spirit and institutions by the establishment of the Congregations of the Holy Ghost and of Wisdom.

CHAPTER II.

HIS GLORY.

The day, apparently, is not far distant, when the successor of St. Peter, by proposing Montfort for our imitation, will solemnly proclaim his triumph in heaven. But even upon earth, which had formerly been the witness of his humiliations, God has been pleased to manifest his glory, both by numerous miracles, and by testimonies of veneration, of which He has permitted him to become the object.

The news of the death of the holy missionary was no sooner spread abroad than a revolution, as it were, took place in the minds of men. They who, up to that time, had not dared to pronounce an opinion upon such extraordinary virtue, those even, who had simply disapproved of his conduct, found themselves on a sudden marvellously changed, and, with the exception of the Jansenists, they all had but one voice to glorify God in His faithful servant. The body was exposed in the nave of the parish church of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, and every one, out of devotion, endeavoured to touch it with rosaries, pictures, and handkerchiefs. Men came from all parts to his funeral. The veneration shown was equal to the grief. When the moment came to lay the body in the earth, the whole of the multitude gave way to bitter grief, as if in losing Montfort they had lost their all. No children ever wept more bitterly for a beloved father. The Bishop of La Rochelle was more than any one sensible to the great loss

which had been sustained. On hearing of it, he was unable to restrain his tears, and openly said that he had lost the best priest in his diocese. Several prelates, even those who had formerly been somewhat unfavourable to Montfort (amongst others Mgr. de la Poype, Bishop of Poitiers,) gave most striking testimony, both by word of mouth and in writing, to the eminent virtues of the holy missionary. There were two funeral orations pronounced in his praise, one in the parish church of Saint-Laurent, the other at La Rochelle, in the chapel of the Jesuits, who thought that they owed this mark of respect to a man who had always honoured them with his confidence and friendship. It was resolved to write his life. His portrait was everywhere circulated, and before long there was not a house in the district without one. Hymns were also composed in his honour, who had himself composed so many to the praise of his Sovereign Master. The cemetery in which his body reposed was every day more and more crowded with pilgrims, who came to recommend themselves to his prayers; and God Himself shewed, by a great number of miracles, how pleasing was this devotion in His sight. The pious and prudent Bishop of La Rochelle took the necessary measures to prevent the judgment of the Church being anticipated; but whilst forbidding all public "cultus," he approved of private devotion being shown to Montfort, and of his tomb being visited in pious confidence. He even permitted, at the request of the Marquise de Bouillé, the body to be removed from the cemetery into the parish church, where it was placed in a vault close to the altar of the Blessed Virgin.

M. le Curé of Saint Laurent would not allow the exhumation of the body to take place in the day time, nor many persons to be present at it,

as he had good reason to fear that as it had been interred for more than eighteen months, without any precautions having been taken, it might exhale an insufferable stench. He arranged that the ceremony should take place during the night of the twelfth of November, 1717, in the presence of M. Friault, vicaire of the parish, the Marquis de Trézidedi, Mdlle. d'Auvais, and Sister Mathurine, who had provided for the expenses of the vault, and of the translation. A few other persons, however, were invited to take part in the labour, and several others also contrived to find their way into the church. "When the coffin was reached," says M. Friault, in his authentic account of the ceremony, "far from exhaling any bad smell, as had been expected, we were all surprised to perceive a very pleasant odour, with which the very earth which surrounded it was impregnated. After this, the persons who were standing by had no fear in approaching. The coffin was placed on two benches beyond the balustrade of the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, and when the lid of the coffin had been removed we were surprised to see a quantity of little flies with green wings, which sent forth a humming sound like that of bees around their hive. There was, however, no corrupt matter nor putrefaction, and the flesh was white and sound. The Curé having then arrived, and having approached the coffin, perceived no bad smell, and found the face of the servant of God entire, quite recognisable, and in no way disfigured. His Lordship the Bishop had forbidden the body to be touched; but this did not prevent several persons who had slipped into the church from tearing off shreds of his cassock and alb, and from cutting off pieces of his coffin. Another coffin of oakwood had been provided, in which were placed the first coffin and

the body. It was then deposited on two trestles in a vault which had been prepared for it, and after the vault had been walled up, a small cenotaph was erected above it, on which the following epitaph may still be read.

QUID CERNIS, VIATOR?
LUMEN OBSCURUM,
VIRUM CHARITATIS IGNE CONSUMPTUM,
OMNIBUS OMNIA FACTUM,
LUDOVICUM-MARIAM GRIGNON DE MONTFORT.
SI VITAM PETIS, NULLA INTEGRIOR;
SI PŒNITENTIAM, NULLA AUSTERIOR;
SI ZELUM, NULLUS ARDENTIOR;
SI PIETATEM IN MARIAM,
NULLUS BERNARDO SIMILIOR.
SACERDOS CHRISTI CHRISTUM MORIBUS EXPRESSIT;
VERBIS UBIQUE DOCUIT;
INDEFESSUS, NONNISI IN FERETRO RECUBUIT;
PAUPERUM PATER,
ORPHANORUM PATRONUS,
PECCATORUM RECONCILIATOR;
MORS GLORIOSA VITÆ SIMILIS;
UT VIXERAT DEVIXIT;
AD COELUM DEO MATURUS EVOLAVIT.
DIE 28 MENSIS APRILIS.
ANNO DOMINI 1716 OBIIT
43 ÆTATATIS SUAE.*

* "What dost thou see, O traveller? A light in a dark place; a man consumed with the fire of charity, who was made all things to all men, Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort. If thou considerest his life, there never was a holier; if his penance, there was never one more austere; if his zeal, no man was more burning in his zeal; if his devotion to Mary, no one was more like to Bernard. A priest of Christ, he shewed forth Christ in his actions, and taught Him everywhere by his words. Unwearied, he rested only in his grave; the father of the poor, the protector of orphans, the reconciler of sinners; his glorious death was like unto his life; as he had lived, so he died; and, ripe for God, his soul passed away to heaven. He died on the 28th day of the month of April, in the year of our Lord, 1716, in the forty-third year of his age."

The Abbé Barin, Vicar-General of Nantes, and an old friend of Montfort, sent another marble slab, which was fastened to the wall above the tomb. On it we read these words:

> "Here rests the body of Messire Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, an excellent missionary, whose life was very innocent, whose penance was admirable, whose discourses were filled with the grace of the Holy Ghost, and converted an innumerable number of heretics and sinners; whose zeal for the honour of the Most Holy Virgin, and for the establishment of the Rosary, persevered to the last day of his life. He died whilst giving a mission in this parish, on the 28th of April, 1716.
>
> "In proof of his affection, Messire L. Barin, Canon, Precentor, and Vicar General of the Cathedral Church of Nantes."

These marks of honour did but increase the concourse of pilgrims at the tomb of the servant of God; and this concourse still lasts, and becomes every day more considerable. It is not only the inhabitants of the district who crowd around his venerated body, for men come to it from a distance of thirty leagues and more. Not a day passes, but the little town of Saint-Laurent sees some stranger, attracted by the desire of praying at the tomb of the servant of God; nor is there any hour when the stranger can find himself alone at his tomb. But on certain days the concourse is so great that to reach the venerated sepulchre the pilgrim has often to wait several hours, in the midst of a crowd, and yet in this

crowd there is not the least disorder. Each person has his own private desires, and each one busies himself in laying them at the feet of Montfort. One asks for the cure or the conversion of some one dear to him; another, occupied with his own wants, corporal or spiritual, lays them before the servant of God in the secrecy of his heart; but all are of one mind in their confidence and devotion. Up to the present time no abuse has dishonoured this concourse of pilgrims. Once only, it might have occurred, had it not been for the prudent precautions of the ecclesiastical authorities. Notwithstanding the prohibition from the very first of the Bishop of La Rochelle, every day saw *ex voto* offerings of all kinds laid upon the tombstone, and even now it would every day be crowded with them, were not these offerings, in accordance with the order of the actual Bishop of Luçon, carefully removed. But if the confidence of the faithful cannot show itself by demonstrations which might anticipate the judgment of the Church, it is not on that account the less strong. The pilgrims carry away with them whatever they can detach from the venerated monument; no sooner is it restored than it is subjected anew to these honourable degradations. Even its dust, we are assured, has more than once worked miracles. A great number of persons, too weak to make the journey themselves, have sent linen to be laid on the tomb, which has often acquired by the touch a power of working miracles. Novenas of prayers, especially of Masses, are asked for daily, in consequence of the same confidence. Not that these Masses can be said at the tomb of Montfort, or in his honour, but they are celebrated at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, which is near his tomb. And we love to believe that this vicinity renders Mary more attentive to the

prayers which are addressed to her as it were, under the eyes of her faithful servant, and that even God accepts the Divine Victim with especial favour when it is offered, so to speak, by the hands of him who always offered it with so much devotion.

This confidence of the people in Montfort's powerful intercession was inspired by the conviction which they all entertained of his sanctity, and by the favours which thousands of persons declared they had obtained at his hands. Even shortly after his death they began to make a collection of these marvellous facts and testimonies to his heroic virtues; juridical investigations took place; procès-verbaux were drawn up, some precious fragments of which have alone escaped the ravages of time and the revolutions. No doubt was felt that one day the process of Montfort's canonization would be commenced, and materials were therefore prepared for it. But when the congregations founded by him began to assume such importance as to allow them to engage in this long and expensive undertaking, the storm was heard rumbling over France, and breaking out soon after with terrible effect, it obliged them to defer the matter to more peaceful days. At length, when the proper time seemed to have arrived, a serious attempt was made to procure for the pious impatience of the people the consolation of seeing placed upon the altars of the Church the image of him whom they had already honoured upon the altars of their hearts. At the request of the two congregations founded by Montfort, the mother houses of which were established near his tomb, Mgr. Soyer, Bishop of Luçon, of which diocese Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre now forms part, gave, in the month of August 1829, the necessary orders for the drawing up of a double process; the

first tending to establish the truth of the virtues and miracles of the servant of God, the second having for object to prove, that in conformity with the prohibitions of the Sovereign Pontiffs, the "cultus" reserved to saints recognized by the Church, had never been actually paid to Montfort, or only with the approbation of the ecclesiastical authorities. A court was in consequence erected, all the members of which were obliged by oath, to fulfil conscientiously the different commissions entrusted to their charge. One of the vicars-general acted for the bishop; several members of the chapter sat as judges with him, or discharged the functions of sub-promoters of the faith, and ecclesiastical notaries before the court; others, also ecclesiastics, were charged with all the necessary citations. A great number of witnesses were called. After having taken the oath before the holy altar, with their hand upon the Gospel, to speak the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, under pain of excommunication *ipso facto*, reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff, they had to reply to the numerous questions which had been sent from Rome, as well as to all those which it was thought necessary to add. All the documents relating to the cause, whether the writings of Montfort himself, or all those which had reference to him, were examined with the greatest care. At length, these documents, together with all the verbal processes, the result of long and conscientious labour, were clothed in legal form, sealed with care, and confided to two sworn deputies, to be carried by them to Rome, and placed in the hands of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. This embassy was entrusted with an eloquent petition from the Bishop of Luçon, in which he thus addresses the Sovereign Pontiff:

"Urged by the long-expressed wishes of the

clergy and of all the faithful of my diocese, I submit to the judgment of your Holiness the admirable life of Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, that extraordinary man, whom God, ever attentive to the preservation of His Church, raised up in these our parts, towards the commencement of the last century, to uphold the faith and religion then so greatly shaken, and to oppose the ravages of incredulity and heresy, which threatened almost the entire Church." After rapidly tracing a brilliant sketch of Montfort's sublime virtues, he adds: "In a word, Most Holy Father, I cannot better describe this admirable man than by applying to him what the Scripture says of a holy king of Juda, 'his memory is like the composition of a sweet smell made by the art of a perfumer: his remembrance shall be sweet as honey in every mouth, and as music at a banquet of wine. He was directed by God unto the repentance of the nation, and he took away the abomination of wickedness. He devoted his heart to the Lord, and in the days of sinners he strengthened godliness.'* Lastly, Most Holy Father, the opinion, day by day burning stronger, which all the people have formed of the holiness of this apostolic man, and the public notoriety of the cures and other miraculous favours daily obtained through his intercession, have drawn and are still drawing to his tomb an incredible number of persons, not from my diocese alone, but from all the neighbouring dioceses, and this to such an extent that not a day passes but some one of the faithful comes to satisfy his devotion at the ashes of the holy missionary. All would eagerly pay to him the public 'cultus' reserved to saints recognised by the Church, were they not, out of respect to

* Ecclus. xlix. 1-4.

the Apostolic See, prevented from anticipating the judgment of the common Father of the faithful."

Twenty other prelates, cardinals, archbishops, or bishops of France, joined their respective petitions, to that of the Bishop of Luçon. A bishop greatly venerated by his colleagues, and honoured with special affection by the head of the Church himself, thus wrote to the Holy Father: "At a moment when several bishops of France are addressing their humble supplications to your Holiness, in order to obtain your favourable judgment in the cause of the venerable servant of God, Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, perhaps I may be permitted to join my prayers with those of my colleagues in the episcopate, for the success of a matter in which I take a particular interest. Your Holiness will not be surprised at this, most Holy Father, when you hear that I am a native of the same province of France in which this virtuous priest was born, a province which in all times has been remarkable for its attachment to the Catholic Faith, as well as for its horror of all profane novelties, and in which religion, even in these bad days, can still count a very large number of docile children. But this motive is not the only one which endears to me the memory of M. de Montfort; he belongs, in some sort, to the diocese of Paris. It was at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, that celebrated school of solid piety, and sound doctrine, that he pursued his ecclesiastical studies; it was there that he received all his orders, and that he ascended the holy altar for the first time; it was there that he gave the first fruits of the ardent zeal which devoured him, whilst fulfilling the office of catechist in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, so celebrated for the integrity of its faith, and its abundant alms. At a later period, the hospital of La Salpétrière, the admirable monu-

ment of the charity of St. Vincent de Paul, and Mont Valerien, a place rendered famous by the piety of the faithful, were witnesses of his labours. Moreover, it was here that he contracted a holy friendship with several great servants of God, who were at that time residing in the capital, and, above all, with M. Desplaces, another Breton priest, and founder of the seminary of Saint-Esprit. His profound humility, his detachment from earthly things, his estrangement from the vanities of the world, his spirit of poverty, penance, and mortification, the indefatigable zeal with which he evangelised Brittany and Poitou, the traces of which are still perceptible, notwithstanding the iniquity of the times; his most holy life, and his precious death, the miracles which God has been pleased to work for a whole century, through the intercession of His servant; these are some of the titles of his solid glory before God and man, which will render eternal the memory of Venerable Grignon de Montfort. I should deem myself happy, most Holy Father, should your Holiness deign to find any value in my suffrage in favour of this virtuous priest, and if I could contribute, by my prayers, to give to the Church of France, overwhelmed at the present day by so many calamities, a new protector in heaven, and to her clergy a new model." The cause of Montfort's canonization was submitted in this manner to the judgment of Rome, in the course of the year 1831, was favourably received by the Sovereign Pontiff, and referred for examination after certain preliminary formalities, to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Mgr. Pescetelli was charged by the congregation, as Promoter of the Faith, to carefully examine the cause, and to attack it on all its weak points, a duty which he discharged with all the zeal which so grave a question deserved. For

four years, sheltered from all foreign influence, he studied in private all the documents of the process, and, from the admirable skill which is displayed in his printed observations, it is easy to see that he neglected nothing, but examined everything, compared the several documents together, and allowed no difficulty or false allegation to escape him. His objections were then sent back to the advocate of the cause, and were replied to by the latter in a memorial, which was also printed. Lastly, at the prayer of the Rev. Father Della Marca, prior of Dominicans, and protector of the cause at Rome, the Sacred Congregation of Rites, having met together at the Quirinal on the first of September, 1838, in solemn assembly, under the presidency of Cardinal Pedicini, vice chancellor of the Holy Roman Church, after having again heard the promoter of the faith, and having carefully weighed the whole matter, unanimously decided that grounds had been shown for proceeding with the cause, if such were the good pleasure of His Holiness. In consequence of this decision, the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XVI., issued a decree on the seventh of the same month, in which he granted to Montfort the title of Venerable, and approved of the Sacred Congregation proceeding with the cause of the beatification and canonization. "The great ability and severity displayed by the promoter of the faith in his attacks upon this cause," says a letter from Rome, "not having interfered with the unanimous approval of its introduction, there is no doubt that, before very long, the pious longings of the faithful will be satisfied by the issue of the decree of beatification."

Indeed, from this period, the cause has been carried on with complete success. On the third of August 1839, the process, known by the name of

Non-cultus, having for its object to prove that the judgment of the Church has not been anticipated, by paying to Montfort the worship reserved to saints, was unanimously voted by the General Congregation of the Rites. The prudent slowness of Rome, and the multiplicity of its precautions in questions of this nature can alone retard the happy conclusion of the cause.*

Whilst waiting for this day of Divine Providence, when God will be so glorified in His servant, and without wishing to anticipate the Church's judgment on the miracles attributed to Montfort, it may be useful, before ending this chapter on his glory, to add a few facts to the numerous facts already mentioned in this history, which have shown him to us as a thaumaturge and prophet. These new facts are in themselves so numerous, that it will be necessary to confine our attention to a few only, which, occurring from time to time, during the years which have elapsed from the death of the holy priest, down to our own days, will suffice to show that the finger of God has never ceased to be present in the whole matter.

We will confine ourselves to a single account of the events; for it does not enter into the plan of this history to examine whether the judicial proofs, and the rigorous conditions required for true miracles, have been all complied with; in such a matter we wait for the decision of Rome. For the present, one reflection will suffice. It is certain that a great number of events, to say the least, very extraordinary, and which could not have been brought about by the power of man, have taken

* On the 12th of May, 1853, the writings of the Venerable de Montfort were declared exempt from all error which could be a bar to his canonization; and in October 1869, His Holiness Pope Pius IX. promulgated the decree concerning his heroic virtue, and authorised the Sacred Congregation to proceed to the investigation of the four miracles necessary for his beatification.—(Tr.)

place at the very moment when they were asked of God through the intercession of Montfort. Now, even supposing that each of these events taken singly, could, absolutely speaking, be attributed to natural causes, does not this concurrence of so many extraordinary events, happening precisely through the same cause, show that God, in His Providence, has been pleased to reward the confidence of the faithful, and to manifest the glory of him who was its object? And how much stronger will this argument become, if we consider that this man's life was entirely filled with works of virtue, more extraordinary than even the miracles attributed to his intercession? It is not astonishing, then, to find that the end corresponds with the beginning.

Marie Gresland, of the parish of Saint-Hilaire, near Mortagne-sur-Sèvre, was about eight years old, when, in 1782, her tongue, in consequence of small pox, began to corrupt; it was, therefore, burnt away down to the root, with nitrate of silver. Two years passed away without her being able not only to articulate distinctly a single word, but to utter anything but a feeble cry, as in the case of those who are dumb. Her parents, not hoping anything from man, had turned towards God. They went to make a novena for their little daughter at Montfort's tomb. On their return home, one of Mary's brothers having taken an apple, Mary told him to leave it alone. The child, much frightened, ran to meet his mother, crying out that his sister could speak; and, indeed, from that moment, she was able to speak distinctly, and to sing with ease. This event made a great noise at the time; a great number of persons, and amongst others the Duc d' Aiguillon, governor of Brittany, could not believe either their eyes or ears; all were unanimous in

recognising the miracle. Père Languet, a Jesuit, had a little book printed to prove its reality. Some verses were composed at Nantes upon the subject, and the *Gazette de France* of the 16th of December, 1763, informed its readers of the fact, although the account which it gave was wanting in accuracy.

The following fact, related by the prefect of studies, at the college of Beaupréau, was printed at the very time when it occurred, and when all the witnesses could certify its truth. Young François Roasse, a student of the third class in the college of Beaupréau, had fallen ill in the beginning of September, 1778. One evening, about nine o'clock, the servants, whose duty it was to watch by his side, came to summon me, evidently very much alarmed at the state of the sick youth. His language surprised them all the more, as, in common with the whole college, they had been edified by the holy and exemplary life which he had always led, during the three years he had been in the college. My surprise was extreme, when, on entering the infirmary, I saw the young man in a state of great agitation, crying out with all his might, that he was damned, and that there was no more mercy for him; in a word, abandoned to the most frightful despair. I tried in every way to inspire him with confidence. Seeing all my efforts useless, I went and woke up the principal of the college, who was his confessor, and who, notwithstanding all his attempts to reanimate the confidence of the youth, was unable in any way to influence his mind. The sick young man rejected with violence the crucifix which was presented to him, and uttered howls which were heard throughout the whole house; in a word, he spoke the language of one who had been damned.

This frightful scene had lasted nearly three

quarters of an hour, when it came into my mind to have recourse to M. de Montfort. I immediately knelt down, and promised aloud to say a mass, at the altar of the chapel in which he is interred, asking of God, through his intercession, that He would deign to restore peace to the poor afflicted youth.

I had scarcely finished, when instantly an entire change passed over the young man. His confidence became as full and as firm as his despair had been frightful. The joy with which his heart was suddenly inundated, was so strong, that it showed itself outwardly in the most tender words, and the most expressive actions. He raised his hands and eyes to heaven, he flung himself forward as if he would throw himself upon the bosom of God, whom he called his beloved, the God of his heart; he took the principal's hand and kissed it, a moment afterwards he pressed my hand in token of his gratitude. Had any one entered the infirmary at that moment, he would not even have suspected him to be ill. He spoke and acted with all the freedom of a man in perfect health. From that moment his confidence was unchangeable, of which he continued to show the most unmistakeable signs until his last breath, which he gently, and without any effort, gave up to God about five hours afterwards.

Mdle. Madeline Langlois, born at Saint-Florent-le-Vieil, in the diocese of Angers, on the first of January, 1780, and afterwards resident at La-Chapelle-du-Genêt, in the same diocese, was afflicted at the age of fifteen, with an illness which lasted eight years, without intermission, and yielded at last only to the most violent remedies. About a year afterwards, towards the beginning of 1804, her skin became covered with an eruption, which was driven inwards by the application of

ointment. This caused violent pains, which resulted, a little later, in a fresh eruption more alarming than the former. Unlike the former, it broke out over the whole body, and particularly on its more sensitive parts; it was at one time of a bright red colour, at another full of matter, and it was also from time to time covered with a very thick incrustation. The pains were so violent, and so continual, especially from the end of November 1805, to the 26th of March, 1806, that the sick person remained the whole time sitting on her bed, swaying herself backwards and forwards, without ceasing, in order to distract herself from her sufferings, and, if possible, to calm them. Neither the care of her relations, nor the skill of the numerous physicians who had been called in, could afford her any relief, and it was the general opinion that her sufferings could only be ended by death. Mdle. Langlois, looking for no further help from human remedies, asked, and obtained leave, after many entreaties, to be taken to the tomb of Montfort. On the 25th of March, 1806, she was placed with great difficulty on horseback. Two of her relations walked by her side to hold her up, and accompanied her in this manner very slowly to Saint-Laurent. The next day, after having passed an extremely painful night, and having prepared herself by different acts of devotion, she was taken to the tomb. Scarcely had her sick body touched it, when a delicious freshness spread over her whole body, and she cried out that she was healed. Of this she gave good proof, by walking without support the whole length of the church, to the chief door. There remained not even the least appearance of an eruption, her skin had recovered its natural colour and cleanness. In the evening, she went, without being supported by any one, to visit several persons of her ac-

quaintance, and certain places of devotion at some distance from the tomb. On the following day, instead of returning home on horseback, as her relations were anxious she should do by way of precaution, she determined to walk the whole way, although it was a distance of six leagues, and the roads were very rough. She walked the half of the distance one day, and the remainder on the next, and with such ease, that her relations were unable to follow her. On seeing her arrive, the little children cried out: "Who can it be? If she were not dying, one would say that it was Mdle. de Langlois." They ran to call their mothers, and every one came to the door to see. They could hardly believe their eyes, but the perseverance of the cure proved its reality.

Mdle. Marie Clotilde de Vezins fell ill in the beginning of November 1820. She was seven years and a few months old. Up to that time her extremely delicate health had inspired many fears; but at this period she was attacked by an inflammation of the bowels, which, notwithstanding all the efforts of medical skill, soon left no room for hope. A continual, and often very violent fever, joined to all the other accidental complications of inflammation, weakened the poor child to such a degree, that she was unable to bear the light, or even the least noise. To move her, or even to touch her head, was enough to cause her to faint. Often a cold sweat bathed her forehead. Her mother, in her intense desire to save her child, not being satisfied with the physicians of the place, although skilful enough, determined to try and move her to Nantes. It was impossible to make use of a carriage for this purpose, however easy it might be; in her ingenious affection, she thought of contriving a litter, by means of which, two men on foot might gently carry the little invalid on

their shoulders. She meant herself to accompany her, but the physicians declared that removal in any kind of way was simply impossible, and that if it were attempted, she would have the sorrow of seeing her little daughter die on the road. For forty days and more the illness continued to make alarming progress. The stomach was extremely swollen, and all the symptoms of approaching death combined together so as to leave the physicians no other duty, but to announce to the poor mother the loss she was about to sustain. M. de Vezins then conceived the pious idea of sending to Saint-Laurent one of the sick child's shirts in order to have it placed on Montfort's tomb. She also began a novena of prayers. The shirt was brought back to her at the very moment, when, having lost all hope, her only thought was to prepare for her sacrifice. Then, making the sign of the cross, she cried out, much affected: "O, my God, we do not deserve that Thou shouldst work a miracle for us!" The sick child had heard her. "Mamma," she said, "give me the shirt quick, give it me quick." Assisted by a few persons, the mother endeavoured to put it on her. Hardly had the shirt touched her shoulders, when, without any crisis, the swelling of the stomach entirely disappeared, and, suddenly recovering her strength, she cried out, "I am cured!" Her brother, who was near her bed, fell upon his knees, and recited the Te Deum. Her mother, transported with joy, knew not how to testify her gratitude. In a moment the room was filled with people, who, on their knees, near the bed, before a crucifix, blessed God, every one in his own way. Meanwhile little Clotilde, who for more than twenty days had been unable to move herself, had risen up on her bed, and thrown herself upon her knees to return thanks to God. She then asked for her clothes,

pin out of bed, walked about the room, looked out at the window, muttered as a soul, ran to see her sister in a distant room and notwithstanding the numerous images of the saints and crucifixes, passed a very unquiet night. She recovered so well on the next and following days, that, at the end of the week, she was allowed to make a journey of twenty-five leagues. Her health, although normally still delicate, as it had been before her illness, never afterwards suffered in any way that could be regarded as a consequence of her illness.

Anne Martin, thirty-two years old, residing at Saint-Hilaire-du-Bois, in the diocese of Angers, was attacked in 1802 by an illness, which the physicians of Vihiers, Doué, and Angers, called a *pulmonary pleurisy*, with a coma in the stomach. The sick person suffered pain from the stomach to the forehead, which drew from her plaintive cries: she felt as if her head were pulled, twisted, and torn. She threw up from her mouth a great quantity of water so corrupt, that no one could bear its smell. She would often remain for one or two hours speechless, pulseless, senseless, and cold. The physicians himself was unable to say whether she was alive or dead. During the first years of her illness she enjoyed a few minutes of relief, sometimes every eight or fifteen days, when she was able to rise for a little while, to take some nourishment, and to drag herself to Church; but for the last fourteen months the pains had continued without intermission, and the most severe remedies had failed in checking the progress of her sickness. The vomitings were restored; the stomach rejected, with horrible sufferings, every kind of nourishment, and even the softest broths. The illness came to such a head, and became so complicated, that in the opinion of the physicians,

all hope of cure had passed away. They saw no other relief for the sufferings of this poor young woman but patience, no other termination but death. Whilst in this sad state, on the morning of Sunday, the 29th of August, 1837, finding herself alone in her house, sitting on her bed, which for more than a year she had left but twice, she wept. "O, my God," she said, "I will tell you all my pains. Thou knowest them already, it is true, but I will lay them again before Thee. Thou seest that I am a poor young woman, that I am unable to gain my bread, and that I weary all about me. I do not refuse to suffer, if it be Thy good pleasure, but at least give me patience, or, if it be Thy will, that I should be cured, inspire me as to whom I must address for that purpose." At the same instant, feeling herself inspired to invoke Montfort, she offered to God, through his mediation, a few prayers which she proposed to herself to continue for nine days, with no other intention than to obtain the necessary strength to go in a cart, or on horseback, to the tomb of the holy missionary. From this moment she found her stomach freed, felt no longer any pain, and with the exception of weakness, was entirely cured. Fearing, however, that this cure might not last, she said nothing about it, and remained in bed, continuing every day the prayers of her novena. Nevertheless, she had asked for more solid nourishment, and her neighbours, who gave it her, trembling, were much surprised to see her take it with appetite and ease. At last, without waiting for the end of the Novena, on the Saturday morning she rose from her bed, to the great astonishment of every one, and continued from that time to rise and take her meals without difficulty. There was no more fever, no more pain. At the end of fifteen days she had no fear to set out for

Saint-Laurent, and walked about three leagues in order to return thanks to God at the tomb of His servant. From that time her recovery was complete, and her stomach could bear all kinds of food. So sudden a cure caused such surprise to the physicians that they could not refrain from attributing, in their certificates, all the glory of it to God alone.

We will conclude with a narrative, which, although it may not offer all the conditions of juridical proof, is no less characterised by all the marks of truth. The venerable hand to which we are indebted for it gives it an additional value. "I had returned from the diocese of Luçon to Poitiers in 1797," writes Mgr. de Beauregard, a Bishop of Orleans who had resigned, "M. de Chassenon, proprietor of the estate of Curzay, near Lusignan, had invited me to spend a few days at his house. Whilst there I went to Curzay, and announced to the farmers and servants that I would hear the Easter confessions of those who might wish to come to me. The next day, seeing the chapel full of country people, I opened a little mission, which lasted twenty days. I blessed a great number of marriages, baptized a great many children, and gave communion to a hundred and seventy-two persons. I also prepared fifteen young girls for their first communion. The '*prêtres jureurs*' then began a persecution, the result of which was my banishment to Guiana.

"As I was informed that legal proceedings were being taken against me, I thought it my duty to withdraw, and I resolved to leave Curzay on the 25th of April, after having celebrated mass. On the eve of my departure, I saw a man, rather aged, very simply dressed in a linen blouse, enter the place where I heard confessions, and from

which I was then coming out; his head was still covered with hair, which was entirely grey, his face was good; he asked me to hear his confession, and I found fault with him for coming to me just as I was about to leave, as I feared that I might not have time to finish hearing his confession. The poor man then said to me, 'Do not be angry with me, we will soon make all right: when the Marquis has priests here, I always come the last of all.' I placed the poor man in the confessional, and heard his confession. I cannot tell how much he consoled me, for I saw him to be no common Christian. I invited him to return on the next morning for my mass, at which he communicated. Touched at thus meeting him, I made him sit down near me, and asked him who he was, and what was his age. He told me that he was seventy years old; that he had worked all his life at the trade of wood-sawyer, in the woods of the Marquis de Curzay, that he could no longer work, and that 'his own people gave him his bread.' He added that he had never been married. When I asked him, how he had been so happy as to serve God with such fidelity, he told me that his trade had been taught him by a very holy man, who had been for many years wood-sawyer in the forests; that this man, and a most holy Christian, had taken him to missions which had been given by the missionaries of Saint-Laurent, that he had several times taken him to Père Montfort's cross, near Parthenay, to gain the indulgences, and that he himself had gone there several times after the death of his good master, because his good master had told him that M. de Montfort was a saint. '*Pas moins*,' said my good penitent, 'am I grieved in my heart concerning M. de Montfort; I have never told it to any one, but I will tell you everything. When my

good and holy master wood-sawyer took me to the cross, which was planted near Porthenay by M. de Montfort, he said to me: Remark well this cross, it has been placed here, and blessed by that holy priest, after a mission at which many people had been present. When the ceremony was over, M. de Montfort, raising his voice, cried out: 'My brethren, look well at this cross; when it shall become covered with moss, and my tomb shall be raised from the ground, there will be a great war, in which men will kill one another, even the men of the same country; brothers will make war against brothers, and blood will be shed, with many other misfortunes. But the war shall not pass my cross; it shall be the limit of the war, which shall extend from my cross to the west. Ye people, who listen to me, bear this in mind, and tell it to your children, who, in their turn, shall tell it to others.' These words he again repeated.

"'Every time that my good and holy master wood-sawyer took me to the cross of M. de Montfort, he always told me this, and I myself have also related it in the place where I live. But the promise has not been quite fulfilled. The cross is, indeed, full of grey moss, like what grows on old trees, the war has not passed the cross, but I have never heard it said that M. de Montfort's tomb was raised above the ground, no one has spoken about it, and this is my grief.' I consoled the good old man, and said to him: The miracle, as you understand it, that is to say, that the stone placed over the grave of the holy priest, should be raised from the ground, would have been an event little worthy of the power of God; but, as it happens, the tomb of M. de Montfort has been raised above ground. His great reputation for sanctity having been recognised by the Bishop of La Rochelle,

permission has been given by him to take his body out of the earth, and to erect a marble tomb for him, raised above the ground. Twice have I gone to invoke the holy missionary at this tomb, which I have kissed with much reverence.' The poor man could not restrain his joy, and he thanked God for having brought me into those parts, to prove to him that all the promises, or prophecies, of M. de Montfort, had been fulfilled."

Here ends, properly speaking, the history of Venerable Montfort. What follows, is not so much a part of his history itself, as a sequel, but a necessary sequel, if we would understand the whole extent of God's designs over this holy missionary. If no plant can prosper but that which is planted by the hand of our Father Who is in heaven, if the tree is to be judged by its fruit; then, the following book, which gives the history of the two chief congregations established by Montfort, will prove that he was indeed the man of God's Right Hand.

BOOK VI.

ABRIDGED HISTORY OF THE TWO CONGREGATIONS ESTABLISHED BY MONTFORT.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

We have said elsewhere, that it was Montfort's intention that this Congregation of the Holy Ghost should be composed of priests and lay-brethren, and that the priests should form in it a special body, under the title of the Company of Mary. But he died almost before the Congregation had been born. Out of seven brothers who had joined him, four only had made their vows; we have seen their names in his testament. The number of priests was still smaller. MM. Mulot and Vatel had, it is true, shared his last labours; but they do not seem to have entered into any real engagement, nor did they form a community. Once again, then, the word of our Blessed Lord had to be fulfilled: "Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat, falling to the ground, die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."*

Indeed, this work had to bear in every respect the character of the works of God, Who is pleased

* John xii. 24, 25.

to make choice of the weakest instruments to work out the greatest ends. MM. Mulot and Natel were both rather young, unaccustomed to preaching, and even without natural talent required for its success. Up to that time their ministry had been limited to hearing confessions. When the mission of Saint-Laurent was over, M. Mulot had gone to rejoin M. Vatel at Saint-Pompain. There, applying themselves to prayer and study, they neither of them had any other thought but to labour in that parish and in its neighbourhood. M. Mulot, however, did not forget the promise which Montfort had made him when dying, to obtain for him from God the grace of replacing him in the labours of the mission, and although he saw no probability of this happening, he still hoped on. Every day he passed several hours before the Blessed Sacrament; every day he recommended himself to the Queen of Virgins, by reciting his rosary; every day he implored the help of the holy priest, whom he always regarded as his model and master.

For nearly two years, MM. Mulot and Vatel lived in retirement at Saint-Pompain, humbly awaiting the orders of God's Providence, when, towards the end of Lent, 1718, the Curé of Loges invited them to come and labour in his parish. They were under the impression that their only duty would be to hear confessions, and they accepted the offer without any difficulty. What was their astonishment, when they learnt that the Curé had announced to his parishioners that a regular mission was to be given by the successors of Montfort! Their first thought was to decline an engagement, the full extent of which they had not understood; but the Curé insisted, and they were forced to yield. They had written nothing, nor learnt anything by heart, and it was out of their power to

preach extempore. How then was the expectation of the people to be met, who thought to find in the disciples the marvellous talent of the master? Their humility was but little troubled, and they left it to God to make up for their weakness. God blessed their generous resolution. The two missionaries contented themselves with reading some pious books, and adding a few short reflections. But let us hear the account which M. d'Hillerin, a dignitary of the cathedral of La Rochelle, gives of M. Mulot, whose first instruction he had heard. "There was nothing vehement in the tone or action of the preacher; even the truths of which he spoke were not always those which were in themselves striking. Even when he used most action, there was not that arrangement, or those touches of eloquence of which Christian orators make use to stir the human heart, and yet the effect of his words upon his audience was almost marvellous. It was not simply sighs, accompanied by tears, but a terrible burst of cries and sobs which arose on all sides, and which showed how strong was the impression made by the missionary on all alike, without distinction, who listened to him."

After this abundant blessing shed upon his words, M. Mulot was forced to recognise the call of our Lord, and the accomplishment of Montfort's promises. He gave himself up more and more to God's Providence, together with his companion, and both of them continued up to the time of the vacation to labour in giving missions, wherever they were called by the fame of their success. The vacation was employed in ripening in solitude and prayer, their corporal and spiritual strength; after which, when the time for giving missions had come again, they entered anew with fresh ardour upon the apostolic career, without in any way

busying themselves about the future. Nevertheless, their ever-increasing success, determined a few Curés to address a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff, which was supported by the bishops of La Rochelle and Poitiers, in order to obtain the approbation of their rising society, as well as certain spiritual powers, so as to make their ministry more useful. But the only effect of these favours was to encourage them more and more, without as yet forming among them that settled and religious unity which was only to take place at the tomb of their holy founder.

Whilst these things were going on, there arrived that same M. Le Valois, whom Montfort had formerly chosen at the house of Saint-Esprit, at Paris, and of whom he had declared, that he would one day be one of his. From that moment the young seminarist had thought of nothing but how to render himself worthy of this vocation, and a remarkable event, by confirming his high opinion of Montfort's sanctity, had at last determined him to come and join his successor. It happened as follows.

There was in the seminary of Saint-Esprit a young man, who had all the marks of real obsession. One day, when the community was out walking, he entered M. Le Valois' room, and destroyed several pictures, amongst others, one of Montfort, which he tore in pieces, and threw out into the court, where one of the pieces was picked up by a passer by. On the return of the community from their walk, meeting M. Le Valois, he said to him, "Go up, and look in your room, and you will find something worth seeing." M. Le Valois felt quite certain that he had firmly closed his door, and, indeed, he found it locked. He entered, and saw his pictures torn up into little pieces, with the exception of that of Montfort,

which alone he found entire and in its place. But, on looking about more closely, he perceived lines delicately traced, forming, as it were, marks in the places in which it had been torn. Another marvel was, that this picture exhaled so sweet a smell, that his room seemed to be filled with all kinds of flowers. As this scent lasted several days, the directors and students of the house were able to form their own judgment of the fact, as well as of the other circumstances which they have attested. This picture, which was preserved with care in the seminary of Saint-Esprit up to 1774, was then sent to the house of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre.

M. Mulot, as successor of Montfort, had already been named by the Bishop of La Rochelle, superior of the Daughters of Wisdom, recently established at Saint-Laurent. M. Le Valois, after giving a few missions, was appointed their confessor. Thus were united from the very beginning, the two congregations, which had been inspired with the same spirit, and were destined to live the same life. Thus, the hand of God was establishing, little by little, the Congregations of the Holy Ghost, as well as that of Wisdom, close to the ashes of their common founder. A circumstance which occurred advanced the matter still further. The successors of Montfort had been called to Saint-Laurent to give a new mission, and the fruit which here, as everywhere else, they produced, made the inhabitants more than ever desirous that they should fix their residence in the place. Montfort predicted, that God would make use of a layman to procure a dwelling-place for his company: this layman was the Marquis de Magnane, of whom mention has already been made in this history.

Still more remarkable for his rare piety, than

for the splendour of his birth and talents, the Marquis de Magnane had seen long and brilliant service in the wars of Louis XIV. Having retired from the army, and having become a widower, his only thought was how to serve God more perfectly than ever. He had even some idea of entering the ecclesiastical state; but Benedict XIII., whom he went to Rome to consult, dissuaded him from this design, and recommended him to continue to sanctify his last years by every kind of good works. He followed this advice with admirable perseverance, to the age of eighty-six, when he died at Saint-Laurent, in the arms of the missionaries, amongst whom he had fixed his residence towards the end of his life. He was buried in the same chapel of the Blessed Virgin, in which Montfort's ashes repose. In their gratitude, the missionaries thought thus to reunite, after their death, two men both worthy the one of the other, and both closely united by Christian friendship during their life.

At the time of which we speak, the Marquis de Magnane, full of gratitude for the advantages he had formerly derived from his connection with Montfort, eagerly seized the occasion of testifying it to him in the persons of his children. After having contributed, along with the Marquis de Bouillé, in securing at Saint-Laurent, a retreat for the Daughters of Wisdom, he wished to procure the same advantages for the missionaries of the Holy Ghost. Many difficulties presented themselves, but his zeal and generosity removed them all, and a house, called at that time the "Chêne-Vert," and at the present day, "le petit Saint-Esprit," was bought on the 7th of April, 1721. Its wretched condition, however, did not allow the missionaries to take possession of it until the vacation of 1722, and even then they

found it completely bare. They had to work with their hands, like simple workmen, to put it into a little better order and shape.

But their fatigues and inconveniences disappeared altogether before the consolation of seeing themselves at last united in community, and able to perform their exercises of devotion in common. This, however, was not enough. Besides a house, and a common rule, they stood in need of a superior, armed with the necessary authority to govern and rule them. M. Mulot had, it is true, in a kind of way been appointed by Montfort, and this sort of nomination, joined to the title of the Superior of the Daughters of Wisdom, had already given him great influence over his brethren; indeed, they obeyed him without difficulty. Nevertheless, his nomination did not seem sufficiently ratified, and he was still regarded as only *primus inter pares*. "The missionaries, therefore, went into retreat," we are told in her Chronicles, by Sister Florence, the assistant of Mother Marie-Louise of Jesus, "in order to ask of God the grace to choose out of their number him whom He had Himself chosen in heaven to govern this infant community, and to defend it against all the attacks, which, it was already felt, would be made against it. At the end of the retreat a ballot was taken, and M. Mulot was unanimously elected; no one better could have been chosen."

The first act of authority of the superior-elect, was to receive the vows of three or four other missionaries, and of five or six brothers, to whom he then assigned a particular dress. From this moment the community of Saint-Esprit was constituted. M. Mulot governed it for twenty-five years, with a prudence which justified the confidence which had been placed in him by his brethren, and God Himself proved, by the abund-

ance of His benedictions, that it was He who had inspired this choice. Everything, in the successor of Montfort, showed him to be the inheritor of his spirit; there was the same abandonment to Providence, the same love of humiliations, the same activity of zeal; his health, formerly so delicate, was able now to bear the most painful labours. When urged to spare himself a little, or to husband his strength, he would reply: "God did not spare His only Son, and His Divine Son did not spare Himself for the salvation of mankind; let us then spare ourselves in nothing, let us not spare ourselves in favour of those whose salvation our Lord has entrusted to us." Like Montfort, M. Mulot possessed in a high degree the gift of touching the heart, and, like him, he gave all the glory of it to God. Humility was his distinctive characteristic. He died whilst giving the mission at Questember, in the diocese of Vannes, on the 12th of May, 1749, at the age of seventy-six. One day, when preaching with much fire, and endeavouring to persuade the inhabitants to give up the practice and abuse of burying the dead in the nave of the church, he expressed a wish that "his own body might serve as pavement, and his heart's blood as cement for the house of God." This prayer was in some sort heard. For when the parishioners had yielded to his wishes, and whilst superintending the changes which were being made in the church and cemetery, he knocked his foot against a nail. The wound, although grave, did not stop him, but before long the pain became extremely violent. "If this mishap," he said, "which is so little after all, compared with what my Divine Saviour has suffered, causes me such smarting pain, how fearful must have been that of my Saviour!" His illness made such rapid progress, that, at the end of eight days, M. Mulot

was no more. He carried with him to the grave the grief of the people; and the clergy of Vannes, as well as of La Rochelle, paid to him the same marks of veneration as are shown to persons of extraordinary sanctity. His heart was taken to Saint-Laurent, and deposited in one of the walls of the chapel of the Daughters of Wisdom.

MM. Vatel and Le Valois, being dead, M. Mulot had chosen for his successor M. Audubon, a native of Safles d' Olonne; his choice was ratified by his brethren. M. Audubon was then thirty-eight years old. From his childhood he had been remarkable for rare piety. His government, full of prudence and sweetness, kept up the first fervour of his ever-growing company. His death, which took place during the mission at Poiré, near Fontenay-le-Comte, deserves especial mention. We will give a few passages of a letter written upon this occasion by M. Besnard.

"During all his illness, which lasted from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to Monday, the Octave day, he had not the least fear of death, but looked it in the face with the eyes of faith, as the most perfect sacrifice which he could make of himself to God. We had no need to exhort him to submission; the words continually on his lips were such as were most calculated to testify with what ardour he longed to be united with his Sovereign Good. When the physician and surgeon proposed to him a very painful operation, he said that he would consult us all together, and leave it to our decision. We were of opinion that he had strength to undergo the operation, and he immediately accepted it. It lasted at least from five to eight o'clock, at different intervals, but with indescribable pain, and unfortunately without success. The surgeon withdrew without having succeeded. From that moment, the sick

man gave way to nothing but transports of love. 'Oh, how thankful I am,' he cried out with joy painted on his face; 'how happy I am that I accepted the operation! Oh, how thankful I am! I am lying now upon the cross! Ah, how thankful I am to die upon the mission.....This is a grace which I have not merited.' The Holy Viaticum was given him, and he received it with feelings of ecstasy—(I have no other terms sufficiently strong by which I can describe them.) 'I wish to make my profession of faith,' he said, 'I wish to make my profession of faith,' and he did so aloud, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, uttering a special anathema against the errors of Jansenius and Quesnel. When he had received the Holy Viaticum, he remained a long time without moving in adoration of our Blessed Lord then within him, and busied in conversing with his Beloved; he then placed his hand upon his heart, to show us his happiness in possessing Jesus Christ. He received Extreme Unction with similar feelings, and when he was given the crucifix to kiss he cried out, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth—*Credo quod Redemptor meus vivit.*' When I said to him that he suffered much, he replied in an animated tone, 'Nothing, nothing, I am too happy for the grace which God has given me to die upon the mission.' He often repeated these words, '*Cursum consummavi—Tempus prope est. Incolatus meus prolongatus est.*' Having been for eight days upon his back, he said, 'I am like Job upon his dunghill, I go to the house of my eternity.' 'It is thus that life passes away.' Then, addressing the missionaries who were round his bed, he said to them, 'If God gives me this grace, if He loads me with so many consolations, it is the effect of your prayers. Ah, how much I owe you!' He wished to embrace them one after

the other, saying, *Pax tecum*, and asking their pardon. He asked me for his crucifix. 'Death is attached to it,' he said, 'I wish to kiss it, to caress it, to love it.' He kissed it with astonishing eagerness, saying, 'I embrace death, I love death.' And then he always came back to the same words, 'Ah, how thankful I am to die upon the mission!' About three hours before his death, when some one wished to speak to him, he said, 'Leave me, leave me, I am busy.' His eyes were fixed on heaven, and he remained without moving for a very long time, like a man who was intent upon some ravishing vision. This state lasted a full hour. After this he could hardly speak, and yet he was heard pronouncing these words, 'In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam.' At length, sinking little by little, he gently breathed his last, on the 15th of December, 1755."

The author of this letter, M. Besnard, was himself elected successor to M. Audubon, in accordance with the expressed desire of the latter. He was of the diocese of Rennes, and for twelve years had been a member of the community of the Holy Ghost. During his long administration of thirty-three years, he rendered important services to the two congregations. It was he who procured for the missionaries, and for the Daughters of Wisdom, more suitable residences, by causing the buildings actually in use to be constructed; it was he who gave them greater stability by obtaining for them letters patent which assured them a legal existence; it was he who, after much research, succeeded in collecting the greater part of the details of Montfort's life; in a word, it was he who supplied what had been left undone by the holy founder, and who drew up the Constitutions of the Daughters of Wisdom, while,

at the same time, he gave them, under the title of "Spiritual Instructions," a valuable collection of counsels and practices, full of the spirit of their Venerable Father, and which often are only reproductions of what he himself has said or written.

M. Besnard died at Saint-Laurent, on the 22nd of April, 1788, and had for successor M. Micquignon, a native of Picardie, who only occupied this post for four years, having died at La Rochelle, on the 18th of January, 1792. His life was shortened by the vivid impression produced upon his mind by the sight of the numberless profanations of that disastrous period. He was unable to listen to the sound of the bell for the masses of the "*prêtres jureurs*," without trembling. "Another sacrilege!" he would cry out, in the deepest pain. As a vigilant pastor, he had sounded, at the approach of danger, a cry of alarm in the midst of his flock. As early as the beginning of the year 1790, in a circular addressed to all the Daughters of Wisdom, he had given them, with the affection of a father, and the firmness of a confessor of the faith, all necessary advice; so that they might be enabled to preserve in the midst of danger, that virtue of faith, which he called "the principle of their good works, the life of their souls, the sole treasure of true Daughters of Wisdom." After having recommended to them devotion to the See of St. Peter, union amongst themselves, fidelity to their rule, and prayer, he ended his letter with a counsel, "which he would like," he said, "to write for them in letters of his own blood;" this was to preserve the simplicity of children of God, and uprightness of heart in all their conduct, and to show kindness to all sorts of persons, even to their greatest enemies; but, above all, the most tender charity towards the poor, the sick, and the unfortunate. "These

virtues," he added, "will at the same time give lustre to your faith, and cause it to triumph over the general depravity; by these you will shine like to lights in the midst of the people of the world, and will force them to render homage to your faith, your religion, and your state of life." We shall soon see with what faithfulness these prudent counsels were carried out.

Notwithstanding the evils of the times, immediately upon the death of M. Audubon, a successor was given him in the person of M. Supiot, a native of Ancenis, and sixty-one years old. The new superior passed the days of terror in the rocks which surround Saint-Laurent. He was a great support of religion in all those parts, and he had received for this purpose the most ample faculties from Mgr. de Coucy, Bishop of La Rochelle. From the depth of his retreat, he encouraged the virtuous, consoled the unfortunate, and prevented, so far as lay in his power, the shedding of blood. One day especially, it happened, that one of the sisters came in haste to tell him that the insurgents were taking fourteen republican prisoners outside the town to shoot them; he ran to the place of execution, threw himself at the feet of the Vendéans, and asked pardon for their prisoners; but all his prayers were made in vain to men who saw in such a massacre only just reprisals. "Well, gentlemen," said the generous old man, placing himself in the midst of the republicans, "as I cannot save the life of my brothers, who are also yours, I will die with them; fire on me." At these words, their rage was stayed, and they withdrew, leaving the apostle of charity to take the republicans to the presbytery, where he promised for them all that they required. Having thus passed through the evil days, and raised the two congregations from their ruins, M. Supiot

thought it time, as he himself relates, "before finishing his career, to retire, in order to weep for all the evil he had occasioned, and all the good he had prevented, and in order to supplicate the goodness of God to pardon him, and to allow him to feel the effects of His infinite mercy." It was his humility which inspired this language; the simple truth was, that from his age and infirmity, he could no longer perform what his zeal would have desired. He obtained, in consequence, M. Duchesne, first as his assistant, in 1806, and at a later period as his successor, in 1810. He lived eight years longer, and only died in 1818, at the age of eighty-seven.

The nomination of M. Duchesne, born in 1761, at Pordic, in the diocese of Saint-Brieuc, was then confirmed by his brethren. He had entered the congregation in 1785, and died on the 22nd of December, 1820. His great goodness endeared him to all who knew him, and particularly to the Daughters of Wisdom, whose father and comforter he showed himself to be on every occasion, and to whom he rendered most important services. In his place, and at his most earnest desire, M. Deshayes, vicar-general of Vannes, who had a little before joined the community of the Holy Ghost, was elected superior on the seventeenth of January, 1821. His government of the two congregations was remarkable for its activity, its faith in God's providence, and the richness of its results.

Having shown the succession of the first seven superiors, who, all of them remarkable for the ardour of their zeal, the holiness of their life, and the purity of their doctrine, guided Montfort's two congregations in their early days, it only remains for us to say a few words about the labours of the community of the Holy Ghost, and of some of its

members. Although the Company of Mary was always limited to the small number of twelve or fifteen missionaries, yet it was always large enough to undertake immense labours. Not to speak of all the care it took of the Community of Wisdom, it gave an almost marvellous number of missions in Poitou, Aunis, Saintonge, Brittany, and Anjou. At the death of M. Mulot in 1749, two hundred and twenty had been already given, and from that period to 1781, their number amounts to three hundred and sixty-five. This zeal never slackened until the days of the great revolution. And when at that time men had to confess the faith at the peril of their lives, no defection ever dishonoured the society of Montfort's children, for which they were congratulated by His Holiness Pope Pius VI., in most honourable terms. Two of their number, MM. Danbe and Verger, who had gone to La Rochelle, with the intention of passing from there into Spain, in order to procure a place of retreat for his Daughters of Wisdom, were recognised, and massacred by the women of the town, who, before tearing them in pieces, first tore out their tongues, "*that tongue*," they said, "*which had made so many fanatics.*" Surely an end to be envied by preachers of the Gospel! When, after the revolutionary trial, the Church was agitated in an opposite sense, by a refusal to obey the measures which the Successor of Peter had thought necessary in order to save the faith in France, all the missionaries of the Holy Ghost showed themselves obedient to the voice of Rome, and none of their number, although in the midst of seduction, fell into the schism of the "Petite Eglise." Their company, no doubt, suffered from the misfortunes of the time, and the number of its members was so greatly reduced, as hardly to suffice for the various wants of the Community of

Wisdom; but it still continued, as soon as liberty was restored to it, to find fresh children to evangelize the people of France. A great number of missions were given. From its bosom went forth two men to preach the Gospel to the heathen, as distinguished for their talents and virtue, as for the dignities to which they were raised. In 1820, M. Couperie was consecrated Bishop of Babylon, and died at Bagdad, in 1829. In 1832, M. Hillereau was named Visitor-Apostolic of Smyrna, with the title of Bishop of Caledonia. He was afterwards made Archbishop of Petra, and after that he occupied at Constantinople the post of Patriarchal Vicar. Before his departure, he expressed a wish to continue a member of a community on which the blessings of heaven seemed to multiply day by day.

We cannot end this chapter on the community of the Holy Ghost, without offering to the gratitude and admiration of our readers, the labours and virtues of the humble Brothers of the Holy Ghost, who form so interesting a part of the community. Designed by Montfort to accompany and assist the missionaries, and afterwards to teach the poor schools, to attend on the sick, and to provide for the temporal necessities of the two communities, they fulfilled from the very first their modest duties with zeal, and this zeal became hereditary amongst them. At the bloody period of the revolution, four of their number were put to death by the Republicans, Frères Boucher, Olivier and Jean at Saint-Laurent, and Frère Antoine at Cholet. This society survived these evil days, and the name of Frère Pierre, amongst others, is still held in veneration. It was, however, threatened with complete and sudden ruin, when Providence raised up M. Deshayes, the superior of the two congregations, to save it. Entering into the spirit

and views of Montfort, he soon raised it up, and so greatly developed it, that it became necessary to divide the occupations of the brethren, so that each one might apply himself with greater fruit to his special work. He therefore formed a separate Congregation of Brothers, devoted to the Christian instruction of children, whilst the others, preserving the name of Brothers of the Holy Ghost, preserved as well the primitive characteristics of their institute. Many graces and virtues have lain, and will still lie hidden, in these new Josephs, until the day when the humble shall be raised to glory; but, meanwhile, it is our duty to rescue a few, at least, of their names from oblivion. We will choose but four out of the number, although all have deserved the same honour.

We have already spoken of the vocation of the first of the Brothers, who, under the name of Brother Mathurin, was so faithfully attached to Montfort, and afterwards to his successors, and who followed their missions for fifty-five years, teaching everywhere the catechism with marvellous success, reciting the rosary, singing the hymns, and serving the missionaries. God permitted him to be tormented for his whole life with scruples, a trial which prevented him making his vows like the other brethren; but his real piety, as well as his long and useful services, merited for him a reward which none of the others shared with him; he received the tonsure at the hands of Mgr. de Foudras, coadjutor of Poitiers. He died at Saint-Laurent in 1760.

Brother Jean had died the preceding year, after having rendered, for thirty years and more, great services to the communities of the Holy Ghost and of Wisdom. He was a good peasant of great simplicity, profound humility, extreme mortifica-

tion, a chastity beyond all proof, and a zeal which counted fatigue as nothing. In the beginning he had been tempted more than once to leave the community; but God had strengthened him in his vocation, and he sometimes made use of this experience to encourage new missionaries or young sisters. During the numerous journeys in which he accompanied them, he busied himself in procuring for them the best of whatever he could find, and then he would go and lie down himself on bare planks, or on the litter of the horses. It is incredible, how much trouble he took for the welfare of the two congregations. He took particular care of the meadows, and when announcing his approaching death to Sister Florence, he said, smiling, "The meadows will weep for me." Having traversed, in every sense of the word, Brittany and Poitou, he was known everywhere, and everywhere the people took delight in hearing him speak of God, so great was his faith and simplicity. It was with the same simplicity that he said one day to the sisters, that "if he could have found a still more ridiculous community, he would have gone in search of it."

Brother Jacques had followed Montfort during the last seven or eight years of his life, and it was through his means that several details of his life were known. It is also due to him, that several writings of the holy missionary have been preserved, and, amongst others, the beautiful letter on the Slavery of the Blessed Virgin. But that which rendered him especially celebrated, was his rare talent for singing hymns. We have seen in the course of this history, that at the mission of Saint-Pompain, the Curé of that parish became converted, that is to say, changed his previously frivolous life into that of a true ecclesiastic. Let us hear what Sister Florence says on this subject

in her Memoirs. "The following was related to me by a good Curé: 'I had invited M. de Montfort,' he told me one day, 'to give a mission in my parish; he succeeded admirably, and worked many wonderful conversions. I alone was touched at nothing. The fifteen first days of the mission had already passed, and my heart was as hard as a stone; I was present at the exercises, but less with the intention of being converted, than to give a good example to my parishioners. Towards the middle of the mission he preached upon mortal sin, with new and extraordinary zeal; the hearts of my parishioners were melted with grief, whilst mine seemed to harden more and more at his words. My conversion, however, was not far distant; for, at the close of the sermon, I heard on a sudden a penetrating voice, which seemed to come from the bottom of the church, and which entoned the hymn, *J'ai perdu Dieu par mon péché.* (I have lost God through my sin.) It was the voice of Brother Jacques, which fell upon my hardened heart like the blow of a hammer. The more he sang, the more my heart was softened. The hymn had not yet finished, when I was no longer master of my sighs, and with my eyes bathed in tears, I went and threw myself at the feet of M. de Montfort, who had the charity to hear my general confession. Happy was I,' said this poor Curé, 'happy was I to have known how to profit by this first moment; for since then, I have, by the grace of God, led quite another life, and it was the hymn of Brother Jacques which worked my conversion.'"

This Brother Jacques had a great friendship for another brother named Joseau, whose truly edifying life has been written by Sister Florence. Having been inwardly urged, from his youth, to leave the world and give himself up entirely to

God, Joseau had to tear himself away from a family which he tenderly loved, in order to avoid the snares which were laid for his virginity by a false friend, and afterwards to guard himself against the contagion of the scruples of Brother Jacques. He had come to Saint-Laurent in search of a place of retreat, and had made the acquaintance of Mother Marie-Louise of Jesus, by whom he was singularly esteemed, and whom he himself zealously assisted with his money and labours, in the state of indigence in which her infant establishment was then placed. When it became a question of forming an establishment of missionaries as well, his first thought was to attach himself to it; but the better to assure himself of the will of God, he resolved to spend a few days in retreat with the Jesuits at Nantes, and determined to make the whole journey barefoot, in the spirit of penance. Although one of his feet was sorely wounded, he still continued his way; but the pain became so violent, and the swelling of the foot so considerable, that he was obliged to stop. Sitting on the edge of a well to take his repast, which consisted of only a bit of dry bread, he recommended himself to his good Mother, the Holy Virgin, washed his wound, touched it in the form of a cross with a little statue of Mary, which he always carried about him, and immediately found himself so perfectly cured, that not even a scar remained, and he was able to continue his journey without any pain. His director of retreat, having asked him among other questions, what was the chief motive which led him to prefer the projected establishments at Saint-Laurent, to so many others which were firmly established, and which were doing so much good in the Church, the young man replied with his usual candour: "My Reverend Father, it is because the establishments of

Saint-Laurent are very poor, and because I would myself wish to live in poverty, by giving my little services to the poor who are working for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls." "Go, my dear child," replied the Father, "do not resist your attraction any longer; follow it out to its full extent, it can only come from God." So clear an answer overwhelmed the pious young man with joy, whose only thought was how to follow the voice of God. Scarcely had the house of the missionaries of Saint-Esprit been bought, when he brought to it his furniture and money, and laboured with incomparable fervour in putting it into order. He was allowed, at the very first general meeting, to make his vows with the other brethren. M. Mulot then fixed upon him to open a poor school at Saint-Laurent, and to take care of the sick. He had none of the knowledge required for this last employment; but a good surgeon of Châtillon took pleasure in giving him lessons, and rendered him capable of giving real assistance to the sick. All these occupations were not enough for him; he worked in the garden, and what is more, as he had great taste for gilding, painting and sculpture, (in which, however, he had only taken a few lessons at long intervals of time,) he employed this talent in the decoration of churches. For a long time his works were preserved. In his zeal he would have desired to be able to do still more for his God, and he often made attempts to go and preach the Gospel in Canada. On one occasion this holy ambition was nearly leading him wrong. A good Curé, having strongly urged him to learn Latin, that he might be able to render greater services to the Church in the ecclesiastical state, Joseau allowed himself to be persuaded, and began this study; but before long, a prudent missionary made it clear to him that it was an illusion,

which would have turned him aside from a state in which he was really doing good service, and would have made him lose many years in the search of another position, perhaps less meritorious for himself, and less useful for others. The benedictions which God showered upon the rest of his life were the best proof that Joseau had been called to live and die in the humble condition of a simple brother. He died in the midst of general veneration, leaving behind him memoirs, which unfortunately have perished, and which comprised the history of the Communities of the Holy Ghost and of Wisdom from their commencement down to the year 1750.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION OF WISDOM.

To give a full description of the Congregation of Wisdom would take a whole volume. There is hardly one of its stages which does not present some interesting details, nor one of its establishments which has not a right to enter into the general sketch of its exalted virtues and excellent institutions. How many fair names have been engraven upon the grateful memory of the people! How many acts of devotion, and holy ingenuity have proved its charity in every way and towards persons of every kind! But as our present object is only to point in a general way to the finger of God in the holy institutions of His servant, it will be enough, if we look at this Congregation in three of its different stages, in its establishment, during the French Revolution, and in its after state.

We have seen in the fourth book, that the Daughters of Wisdom were established by Montfort at La Rochelle, in 1715, for the instruction of poor children. Their number was at first very small, and four sisters formed, under Mother Marie-Louise of Jesus, the whole congregation, at the time of the death of their holy founder. This blow would have destroyed the infant institution, had it been the work of man alone. The worthy Superioress was deeply affected by it, and all the sisters felt that they had lost their father, their counsellor, and support. He had promised them in the future a "nursery of Daughters of Wisdom;" but notwithstanding their great confidence in his sanctity, the accomplishment of such a promise seemed to them a dream, and indeed no mere human prudence could have carried its hopes so far. It is true that their schools were then and for some time afterwards in a most flourishing state, under the high protection of a prelate who greatly venerated Montfort's memory, and esteemed the virtues of his daughters. He had procured for them a more spacious house, which was soon found too small to satisfy the wishes of the parents who desired to place their children under their charge; more than four hundred little girls were there instructed, and formed to piety, with a success which delighted every one, and which was attributed to Montfort's protection in heaven. But this establishment, however useful it might be, was far too small to correspond to the extent of the designs of the holy founder, and yet his devoted Daughters, in their humility, never looked beyond the walls of their schools at La Rochelle. God in His Providence thought and acted for them. They had, however, first of all, to undergo other trials, and so to speak, to pass through death, before they could arrive at life.

The Daughters of Wisdom had been established for three years at La Rochelle, when one day, Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus saw Mdlle. Trichet, her mother, arrive at the schools. The holy Sister soon understood the reason of her visit. Her mother made use of every kind of reason to persuade her to return with her to Poitiers. She knew by experience that natural motives would be insufficient, so she tried more effectual arguments in order to influence her mind. She told her that she had come to see her not out of any mere natural affection, but with the view of a far greater good. She had come, she said, in the name of the Administrators of the Hospital of Poitiers, and of the Bishop himself, who claimed her services, and recalled her to his diocese. Far from wishing to oppose her daughter's great desire of ministering to the poor, according to the plan of M. de Montfort, they were disposed to second her with all their power, having no other desire but to see the Hospital of Poitiers become the chief house of the Congregation, as it had been its cradle. These reasons, and many others equally plausible, made a strong impression upon Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus. She seemed to see in them a path which Providence was opening up before her, in order to lead her to the desired end; but still she hesitated. She took advice, but those whom she consulted were not all of the same opinion. The prudent Bishop of La Rochelle, who at first had been very decidedly against her leaving, ended at last by yielding. Madame Trichet seized the favourable moment, and carried off her daughter. Of the four other Daughters of Wisdom, two, who were themselves from Poitiers, followed their Superioress; the other two, after having placed the key of the school in the hands of the Bishop, went back to their parents, with

whom they remained for four years in a state of uncertainty, until they were again united with the body of the Community. Thus in one moment was destroyed the establishment of La Rochelle, which had cost so much trouble to Montfort.

On the other hand, all the hopes of Mother Marie-Louise of Jesus, with regard to the Hospital of Poitiers soon vanished away. Not that the bishop and the administrators did not show her great good will. They had received her and her companions with every mark of joy, and they were fully disposed to carry out the promises of Madame Trichet; but they added certain conditions which the prudent Superioress judged inadmissible. She therefore passed several months in cruel perplexity. The good she was doing in the hospital, the benedictions of the poor, the praise of the administrators, nothing could calm her mind, and the thought of having broken up Montfort's work at La Rochelle was continually present to her mind. M. Vatal, one of the missionaries of the Holy Ghost, of whom we have so often spoken, and whom she happened at that time to meet, only added to her fears. Her regret was all the more bitter, because it was useless; for how could a congregation be formed, or increase in a hospital? And yet there seemed no way out of her difficulty. Prayer, mortification, and tears, all were tried—and then she hoped against hope.

At last, when everything seemed lost, God took the matter in hand. He wished to have all the glory of the establishment of the Congregation of Wisdom as well as of that of the Holy Ghost. Mother Marie-Louise of Jesus was informed, that a pious lady, Madame le Marquise de Bouillé, showed great zeal for the memory of Montfort, and busied herself in collecting from all parts the testimonies to his sanctity and miracles. It soon occurred to

her, that this lady might be the instrument of God in withdrawing her from her embarrassment, and in realizing the promises of the holy missionary. After having prayed with great fervour, she wrote to her. Before very long, the Marquise de Bouillé was at Poitiers, and they had agreed together to purchase, at Saint-Laurent sur Sèvre, a house for the Daughters of Wisdom, near the tomb of their father. But how was the latter to leave the hospital? Madame de Bouillé went herself to the bishop, and asked his consent; all her solicitations were in vain. She was not disheartened, and called to her assistance the virtuous Marquis de Magnane, of whom we have already spoken. The prelate yielded at last to their united and repeated entreaties; but when Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus gave notice to the administrators of her intention, they all strongly opposed her departure. For fear of her escaping, as she had done before, they placed a guard at the doors of the house, and then begged of the Intendant of the province to interpose his authority. The intendant sent for the sister, who went to him with one of her companions. "What is this I hear of you, my sisters," he said, "that you are going to abandon the poor? On the part of the king I forbid you to leave the hospital, and if you do, I shall know how to find you." Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus was not discouraged; and before long He who commands the storm, and Whom the tempest obeys, removed the opposition. All difficulties were smoothed away, and the faithful servant of God was able to set out for Saint-Laurent, in the month of June, 1720. Her two companions, with a third who had recently joined their little community, arrived at the end of eight days and rejoined their Superioress.

It is difficult to form a just idea of all that the

good daughters of Montfort had to suffer at this first commencement. It was necessary, that being the first, they should be worthy of being proposed as perfect models of patience to those who should come after them, and that their Congregation, to whatever degree of prosperity they might one day arrive, should ever bear in mind that their cradle, like that of their Saviour, had been surrounded by all the signs of abandonment and poverty. The new dwelling of the Daughters of Wisdom was only a poor cottage, where everything was wanting even to the most necessary utensils. For beds they had only a little straw, and for food nothing but coarse bread. These privations must have been to them all the more painful, because they had all enjoyed in their own families, an amount of ease which had sheltered them from such inconveniences. But it was necessary that an undertaking of which Montfort was the father should have still more deeply stamped upon it the Seal of the Cross. Bodily suffering is but a small thing in comparison with that which afflicts the soul, and troubles the conscience. The establishment of the Daughters of Wisdom was opposed, and their kind of life disapproved of, even by those who apparently should have shown themselves their comforters and supporters. These contradictions, however, served only to make more strikingly evident the protection of Providence, the prudence of Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus, and the virtue of all her daughters. They went to the tomb of their father, laid their troubles before him, and came away not without consolation.

Meanwhile the Bishop of La Rochelle, following up the intentions of Montfort, had given them, as we have seen, M. Mulot for their Superior, and shortly afterwards another missionary, M. le Valois, for their confessor. Then in due time the insti-

tute of the Holy Ghost was formed, which was for Mother Marie-Louise of Jesus a guarantee for the future. "Who can express the joy," says Sister Florence, "felt by our dear mother, when she beheld the realization of an establishment which she had so long desired, and for which she had offered so many prayers, communions, vows, fasts and austerities, according to the example of M. de Montfort ?"

The Congregation of Wisdom was soon gladdened by the arrival of four new sisters, and their number rapidly increased from year to year. At the end of four years there were twenty-six sisters. The names of Sisters Saint Joseph, Sainte Catherine, Sainte Agnes, des Anges, du Calvaire, and several others equally dear to the Daughters of Wisdom, will for ever remind them that they have been called to walk in the footsteps of saints. The holy reputation of the sisters, and the blessings which God was pleased to shed upon their labours, caused them to be sent for by different towns, and especially for the hospital of Poitiers, according to the prediction which Montfort had himself made many years before. At this period, that is to say, in 1748, they already served twenty-seven establishments. This number was increased to thirty-nine, at the death of Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus, in 1759, after seventy-four years of a life adorned with the rarest virtue, as is proved by her history. As early as 1732, Louis XV., informed of the great good which the Daughters of Wisdom were doing, had granted them letters of protection. At a later period, in 1773, he received so many urgent petitions in their favour, not only from the Bishops of La Rochelle, Luçon, Poitiers, Rennes, Angers and Vannes, but also from the civil and military authorities of the different places in which they exercised their zeal, that he could no longer

refuse to grant them, as also to the missionaries, a legal existence by letters patent, drawn up in terms most honourable to the two congregations. The Congregation of Wisdom had at that time more than fifty establishments. Firmly established from that moment, it showed itself from day to day more worthy of the blessing of God, and the praise of men, by multiplying its good works in proportion to the increase of its members.

The choir religious had for some time been assisted in their difficult labours by lay-sisters, bound like them by vows, and who in their humility rendered important services to the Congregation.

Whilst the Congregation of Wisdom continued thus to develope itself, and to work outwardly for the good of its neighbours, without on that account losing its interior beauty, or vigour or life, and whilst several hundred Daughters of Wisdom distributed through eighty establishments, were causing men everywhere to bless the goodness of God, and the name of Montfort, the storm of the revolution burst over France. We have seen the pressing recommendations of their superior-general, made to them at that time, to remain firmly attached to the faith, to walk always in simplicity, and to show their charity to all kinds of persons, especially to their greatest enemies. Such also was their rule of conduct, from which they never for a moment swerved. Their chief house was in the very heart of the Vendéan war; it became a hospital, where all the wounded, whether republicans whom the Vendéans took prisoners, or the royalists themselves, were certain to meet with all the attentions which the tenderest charity could show. It often happened that the sisters had need of all their ingenuity, in order to conceal the

republicans from the anger of the victorious royalists. Was the reward of so many virtues to be murder and devastation?

On the 31st of January, 1794, the republicans took possession of the town of Saint-Laurent, entered the house of Wisdom, pillaged and sacked it, and loaded with injuries those of the sisters who had not found means, or had been unwilling to escape. The presence of these soldiers, or rather, brigands, in the sanctuary of innocence and peace, their horrible blasphemies, their obscene talk, all these things together filled these poor defenceless daughters with a terror which it is difficult to describe; but nothing made so great an impression upon them, as to see these wretched men present themselves before them, clothed in the priestly vestments; threats of death were to them as nothing, when compared with this sacrilegious mockery.

Of the thirty-six sisters who then inhabited the house at Saint-Laurent, ten only had escaped, and amongst them the Superioress-General, Sister Sainte Flavie. The twenty-six others assembled together the next morning, as a consequence of an order which had been sent to them, and made sure, that notwithstanding the disorders committed the evening before by the soldiers, the officers, whilst in gratitude thanking them for their former services to their prisoners, would commission them to continue their charge of the sick. They were deceived. At the end of an hour, the General appeared with his staff, and instead of thanks, they had only to listen to words which modesty forbids us to repeat. They were loaded with reproaches. They could not indeed reproach them for wearing this religious habit; they had already left it off; but they were asked why they had remained together contrary to the law. They

answered that they had remained to take care of the sick. Upon this, they only met with fresh insults. A discussion then took place in their presence, as to whether they should be shot upon the spot. At last it was decided that they should be taken to Cholet, and with this intention they were fastened two and two like criminals. Only the infirm and the sick were placed in waggons, and all of them heard the order given, that whoever could not keep up with the rest should be shot.

At length, after having been loaded with insults, and continually threatened with death, they arrived at Cholet, completely exhausted. Instead of being allowed to take their repose and refreshment, which they so much required, they were led at once before the revolutionary committee, before whom they had to undergo a long and painful interrogation. They answered every question with simplicity and prudence, with great courage and dignity. The sword was suspended over their heads, yet not one of them tried to escape from it by falsehood. "What are you doing at Saint-Laurent?" they were asked. "We are taking care of the sick." "Have you any priests?" "You know very well that you have driven them away." "Do you not cause the Sacraments to be administered?" "It is our duty to do so, when we can." "Have you not caused blood to be shed?" "Far from it; we have opposed it as much as we could." "Are you not sorry for the death of the king?" "We do not meddle with politics." "Do you not make devotional pictures?" "It is our business to take care of the sick." After many other questions, accompanied with insults of every kind, they ended by asking them in derision: "Do you wish to live and die in the Catholic, Apostolic,

and Roman religion?" Upon this they all rose, and respectfully answered, "Yes, by the grace of God." This sublime and courageous answer only excited blasphemy, and the heroines of faith and charity were conducted to a kind of guard-house, where, instead of beds, they found a little straw, and where they were left without food for four-and-twenty hours.

At the end of this time, all those over forty years of age were imprisoned, for the purpose of being afterwards shot. The defeat sustained shortly afterwards by the republicans, opened their prison, but one of them had already died of want. The youngest had been placed in the hospital to take care of the wounded, and, in their charity, always ready to render good for evil, were discharging this duty with admirable zeal, when the Vendéans, after having beaten the republicans, forced them to evacuate in disorder the town of Cholet. Was it the first thought of the sisters to seize this occasion of escaping, in order to avoid falling again into the power of their enemies? Far different thoughts filled their minds. Trembling for their dear sick, they thought only of rescuing them from the vengeance of the victorious party, and for this purpose they disguised them, hid their uniforms, and so saved their lives. And when the same men who, a little before, had treated them with so much indignity, were brought to them, riddled with gun shots, and hacked with sword wounds, they gladly received them, loaded them with kindness, and showed them every attention. Before long, the republicans retook the town, and, under the belief that the sisters had delivered up their wounded to the sword of their enemies, they had made up their minds to massacre them, but the wounded themselves with one accord interfered in behalf of their benefactors.

It was thought, however, sufficient recompense to take no harsher measures than to send them to the prisons of Nantes, where they would have to submit to the orders of the infamous Carrier. They remained there in the midst of dirt, and in the most complete destitution, expecting every hour that it would come to their turn to be thrown into the waters of the Loire. Eight of them sank beneath so many sufferings; those who survived Robespierre, were sent for to Brest, by the representative of the people, Jean Bon, where an epidemic rendered their services indispensable in the marine hospital.

Whilst following the sisters to Cholet, who were taken there in chains, we left the republicans masters of the community of Saint-Laurent. After they had pillaged and laid everything waste, they set fire to the house. Three of them discovered the superioress-general in a small by-place, and asked her what she was doing there. "I am looking at my house burning," was her calm reply. One of the three had pity on her, and persuaded his companions to allow her to escape. These kindly sentiments, however, were not shared by all. A sister, who had remained hidden in the house, was arrested just as she was trying to leave it; she was at once murdered, and the members of her body were first hacked to pieces, and then scattered in the street. Another, who had during the evening served the republicans at supper, met with the same treatment during the night.

Whilst the mother house of the Congregation of Wisdom was being thus laid waste, and stained with blood, the nuns, who were dispersed throughout the different establishments, were also more or less ill-treated, according to the character of the local authorities. Two were guillotined at Nantes; they went to the scaffold with the joy of heaven

upon their brows, and the chant of hymns upon their lips; the oldest of these was hardly thirty. As they went along, the people cried out, "Oh, spare these pretty little sisters who sing so well!" But God called them to sing with His angels in heaven. Two others met with the same fate at Rennes. The town of Longeron witnessed, in like manner, the martyrdom of two Daughters of Wisdom. One was murdered at Coron; and another wounded by a sabre-cut was left there for dead. Several of them were taken to Le Mans in a waggon, by the republicans, who not only loaded them with insults, but made two of them get out on the road, in order, as they said, to give the others an idea of their "savoir-faire." They then murdered them before their eyes, left their bodies in the road, and conducted the others to the prison at Le Mans, where four of them died of want. At Poitiers, two others were condemned to pass ten years in irons, and were previously publicly exposed, with this inscription placed above their heads: "Harbourers of fanatic priests." Their noble appearance on the scaffold, their religious calmness under the constraint of the "carcan" iron collar, excited the admiration of the whole city; one of them, Sister Ave, worked quietly at her knitting as long as their exposure lasted. The death of Robespierre delivered them. A great number of other sisters were at the same time suffering confinement in different prisons, especially at Brouage, where they had to undergo the most unworthy treatment; all of them, however, suffered for no other cause than for their inviolable attachment to the faith. In several cases, a falsehood, their remaining silent, or their mere consent, would have sufficed to save their lives and to give them back their liberty. It was a glorious spectacle to see these admirable

Daughters struggling against strong men, and subduing them by the force of virtue. After a discourse of several hours, Sister Eugenie, whom La Rochelle will never forget, rose up, and said in a firm tone of voice, "Enough, gentlemen, my last word is this, the guillotine seems set up for good, take me there; an oath against my conscience you will never get from me." The revolutionists felt cast down at this answer, for they wished to save her. Of this she had a proof, shortly afterwards. "The imprisonment of your sisters has been decreed," she was told, "they must leave; but console yourself, we have made up our minds to keep you at La Rochelle; you will not be banished." Sister Eugenie fell upon her knees, and said, "Be so kind, gentlemen, as not to separate me from my companions; either save them along with me, or send me with them into exile." Sister Eugenie was led away to the prison of Brouage.

The works of God have in them a life which does not suffer them to die, and which raises up the branches of the heavenly palm-trees planted by His Hand, as soon as the storm which had bent them down, has passed away. The year 1794 had not yet ended, nor with it the civil war and its horrors; and yet upon the still smoking ruins of the house of Wisdom, the superioress-general and four of her daughters had reappeared. They had difficulty in finding a single corner to shelter them. The chapel alone had escaped the ravages of a double fire. They were soon again obliged to withdraw, but only to come back again as soon as the year 1796 had afforded them a little calm. Their number then increased, more rapidly indeed than their resources; they were without a roof, without furniture, almost without a morsel of bread. And yet there were young persons who

had courage enough to come to these ruins, and make their noviciate, and thus fill up the places of the martyrs. Gradually as tranquillity was established, the sisters who had been dispersed in their own families, returned to the community. Only one or two forgot the call of obedience; for we cannot count amongst these, those who had only made annual vows, or even those who having formerly taken the religious habit, without making the vows, could, without any kind of apostacy, yield to circumstances, and renounce the religious state. If it be a glory for so numerous a congregation, that in the midst of persecution its daughters should in general have remained firm in the faith, it is no less a glory, that after having put off their habit, gone back to the freedom of the world, and re-engaged themselves in family ties, they should have a second time torn themselves from the world, and again bowed their heads beneath the yoke of an austere rule, especially at a time when fears for the future, and a thousand other pretexts, might have served as an excuse for their cowardice.

As early as the year 1800, the sisters employed in the marine hospital at Brest, resumed their habits, and their example emboldened those of the mother house to do the same. During the days of terror, the sisters had been kept on at Brest, from the impossibility of replacing them, and from the circumstance that an epidemic had even obliged the authorities to increase their number to nearly seventy, by sending, as we have seen, for the sisters who were imprisoned in different places. This establishment had, therefore, become the asylum of the congregation; it alone had prevented the chain of its history from being broken. Thanks to it, the congregation never ceased for an instant to form a visible community. It is true

that the sisters did not wear their habits, but they continued to observe their vows, and the other essential points of their rule. One of the missionaries of the Holy Ghost, M. Duchesne, afterwards superior-general of the congregation, who was at that time concealed in this house, kept up their faith and virtue in the face of the persecutions, of which they were the daily object; for the need which was felt of them, did not prevent them being persecuted in every kind of way, and they had hardly less to suffer than those of their sisters who were in prison.

As order was gradually established, the Daughters of Wisdom were sent for to take charge of most important establishments. From Brest, a holy colony was sent to Toulon. They were asked for at Boulogne, Cherbourg, and other places. "My children," said the *Maire* of La Rochelle, to the soldiers of the hospital, on presenting to them Sister Eugenie, "I bring you back your mother." Everywhere they reappeared with their venerated habit, with the memory of their former services, and the recent glory of their sufferings. Several lay-sisters had been particularly distinguished for their admirable devotion to religion and its ministers. Sisters Helène and Geneviève were rewarded with the honour of being received amongst the number of choir-religious, and of wearing their habit. Others, to whom the same reward was offered, preferred in their humility to remain in the rank of simple lay-sisters.

After having remained faithfully attached to the Holy Roman See, even on the scaffold, it was not likely that they could be seduced away from their allegiance to it, when the schism of the *Petite Eglise* broke out; only three or four, who were at a distance from the mother house, were led away by it. Napoleon helped them to rebuild the ruins

of their house at Saint-Laurent, and always treated them with marked attention. They received from him medals of honour, which, indeed, have also been given to them by every government which has succeeded the empire, and even by foreign princes, in gratitude for the attentions lavished on their soldiers. The congregation soon became more numerous and widely spread than ever, and multiplying from day to day, extended itself to such a degree, that in 1839 it could count, under its direction, besides a numerous noviciate, more than fourteen hundred nuns, and a hundred and twenty-five establishments; hospitals of all kinds, civil, military, and maritime; houses of education and retreat, poor houses, prisons, and schools for the deaf and dumb. No work of charity came amiss to the Daughters of Wisdom, and wherever they are to be found, their virtues and success prove every day more and more that the Tree of Wisdom was really planted by a hand guided from on high, for God alone could have given it this marvellous fruitfulness and this rapid increase.

CONCLUSION.

We cannot better end this description of the Congregations of the Holy Ghost and of Wisdom, and of the whole history of their holy founder, than by placing before our readers a translation of the Brief of the twentieth of May, 1825, which was sent, together with a valuable medal, by the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XII., of Holy memory, to M. Deshayes, at that time superior-general of the missionaries of the Holy Ghost, and of the Daughters of Wisdom.

"To our very Dear Son, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

"The words which one of our predecessors, Adrian II., of happy memory addressed to Charles the Bald, King of France, when informed of that prince's affection for the churches of his kingdom: 'Believe us when we say, that we cherish as the very apple of our eye the virtues which shine forth in you:' these words we think it our duty to use on the present occasion, and to address them in all truth to yourself, and to the pious societies which flourish under your watchful care. And indeed, we are not ignorant, that the two congregations of missionaries and sisters under your direction, which were founded towards the beginning of the last century by the zeal of Father Montfort, have excited the admiration of all good men. We have seen, indeed, in times past, on the one hand, the missionaries undertaking in Brittany and Poitou the instruction of the people, and holy journeys, the number and labour of which have increased from day to day; we have seen them drawing away a countless number of souls from the dangers of vice and error; we have seen, besides, the Daughters of Wisdom giving all their care to the sick, not only with a view to relieve their bodily infirmities, but still more to procure the salvation of their souls, by opportunely recalling to their minds the rewards and punishments of another life; we have seen them, in addition to this, using all their efforts to gather together in their houses young persons from town and country, in order to give them an education at once Christian and useful to the public. So many good works were no doubt worthy of admiration and praise; but inasmuch as religious communities, as it ordinarily happens, are in their commencement, very fervent, and full of ardour and zeal, and yet

sometimes, 'when the enemy cometh and oversoweth cockle,' the end corresponds not to the beginning; it became necessary to look attentively at these two societies, in order to examine their progress, and line of conduct, and to see if perseverance could crown so fair a beginning. When then, seventy years had scarcely passed away from the death of your founders, and France beheld in a time of great calamity her civil and religious constitution overthrown by fanatics, and the wheat sifted and separated to the very last grain, so that one could distinguish both those who were armed with steadfastness for the maintenance of the good cause, and those who still preserved in themselves some sentiments of religion, and those even, who, full of interior corruption, yet outwardly appeared with a certain mark of virtue, when all these troubles arose; when, alas! audacity triumphed over the laws, when the ungodliness which had been let loose against the religion of our fathers had destined and delivered to death all good men; at such a time as this, your two societies, as we know, maintained the holy cause which they had embraced even to their last breath, and looked upon it as an honour and a glory to die in its defence, under the guidance of Him who governed them during the storm.

"And at the present day, after you have been rescued by the special protection of God from the hands of the wicked, we are not ignorant, with what success, under your authority, and through your zeal, these chosen men and brave sisters are labouring for the good of religion in your country. This has been attested before our Apostolic See by our Venerable Brothers, the Archbishops of Bordeaux and Aix, as well as by our Venerable Brothers the Bishops of Luçon, La Rochelle, Poitiers, Rennes, Angers, Coutances, Quimper, Orléans,

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Nantes and Vannes. After testimony so worthy of faith, and having consulted the bishops and other regular prelates, we are convinced, we and our venerable brothers, their Most Reverend Eminences, the Cardinals, that every moment of your time has been consecrated to holy works; we have learnt that the Missionaries of the Society of the Holy Ghost, (as it is called,) are in the habit of preaching in the different dioceses of the kingdom; that from time to time they separate the faithful from the tumult of worldly affairs, and especially the Daughters of Wisdom, in order to place before their eyes the truths of salvation; that these admirable sisters, by their words and their assistance, relieve the afflicted, and above all, the sick; that they have under their care nearly all the maritime hospitals of France, and a great number of other hospitals; that they there assist the infirm, and wait upon them with the greatest tenderness; we have learnt that they have in different places several houses of education for young persons of the devout sex, in which young girls who are ignorant of any trade, and who have not been instructed in Catholic dogmas, may prepare for their state of life, and learn the principles of religion and good morals; in a word, these two societies are so persuaded, that nothing which may be useful to their neighbours can be foreign to the spirit of their institution, that they labour in the instruction of even those whom nature has deprived of hearing, and rendered incapable of being instructed by means of the language we make use of to express our thoughts, and which is so advantageous for the propagation of religion.

"Let us then sing a hymn to the Lord, let us sing a new canticle to the glory of God. For if in the day of His fierce anger and judgments, He

permitted France, the fairest portion of Christendom, to be troubled and agitated by perverse men, and if He suffered her to come within two fingers length of her ruin, it has also been His good pleasure, that in the midst of the devastation of temples, the profanation of the holiest things, and streams of blood most cruelly shed, it has also been His good pleasure, Dear Son, to preserve in your country, in yourself, and your two societies, not only examples of France's ancient piety, but also powerful remedies and instruments of salvation.

"And now that as peace is restored to France, and the family of her most Christian kings has reascended the throne of their ancestors, that your congregations, under the protection of this august house, and through the piety of the archbishops and bishops, who will second your toils and labours, may produce, from day to day, more abundant fruits of piety, this is what we ask without ceasing of the God of all goodness and all greatness. Continue with courage the good work which you have undertaken with the help of God. Suffer yourself not to be stopped by labours or journeys, or by the criticism and calumnies of men, but strive to accomplish what God has allowed you to commence, knowing that the greater your labours, the greater will be your glory and reward in another life. These are the words of one of our predecessors, St. Gregory the Great.

"Lastly, as a pledge of our good will, we give to you, to your zealous missionaries, and to the courageous sisters under your direction, our apostolic benediction."

GOD ALONE.

SELECT WRITINGS

OF THE

VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD

LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS

OF THE

VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD

LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT.

[NOTE.—Although Montfort's thoughts have all been thrown upon paper without care or design, under the rapid dictation of the heart, rather than of the reason, we are forced to recognize in them no common talent. However, in placing his writings before our readers, we have done so, not so much to excite their admiration, as to enable them better to understand the holy missionary. The less they are dressed up and corrected, the clearer will appear the character of their author.]

CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CROSS.

.....Today, the last day of my retreat, I come out, so to speak, of the sweet retirement of my own interior, to trace upon paper a few arrows of the Cross, with which to pierce your hearts. Would to God, that I could only sharpen them with the blood of my veins, instead of the ink of my pen! But alas! even were this required at my hands, I am too great a sinner. May, then, the Spirit of the Living God be, as it were, the life, the strength, and tenor of this letter. May His unction be, as it were, my ink; may His Divine Cross be my pen, and your hearts my paper.

You have united together, Friends of the Cross, as so many soldiers, crucified for conflict with the world, not by flying away from it like monks and nuns, for fear of being vanquished, but like

valiant and brave warriors on the field of battle, without yielding a step or turning your back. Courage, then, and fight valiantly! Unite yourselves together in a strong union of heart and mind, which will be infinitely stronger and more terrible to the world and hell, than the united forces of the kingdom to the enemies of the state. The devils are united for your destruction, be you united for their overthrow; the avaricious are united for the gain of gold and silver, be you united for the conquest of the treasures of eternity, which are enclosed in the cross; the licentious are united for pleasure, be you united for suffering. You are called the Friends of the Cross. How grand a title! I confess to you that I am charmed by it and dazzled. It is more brilliant than the sun, higher than the heavens, more glorious and full of majesty than the most magnificent titles of kings and emperors; it is the great title of Jesus Christ, True God and True Man; it is the unmistakeable title of a Christian.

But if I am carried away by its splendour, I am not the less terrified by its importance. What indispensable and difficult obligations are contained in this name, and expressed by these words of the Holy Ghost: *Genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis.*—"A chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people." A Friend of the Cross is a man chosen by God out of ten thousand, who live according to sense and mere reason, to be a man, all divine, raised above reason, and opposed in everything to sense, by the life and light of pure faith, and by a burning love for the Cross. A Friend of the Cross is an all-powerful king, and a hero who triumphs over the devil, the world, and the flesh, in their triple concupiscence. By the love of humiliation he over-

throws the pride of Satan; by the love of poverty he triumphs over the avarice of the world; by the love of suffering he deadens the sensuality of the flesh. A Friend of the Cross is a holy man, separated from all things visible, whose heart is raised above all that is frail and perishable, whose conversation is in heaven, who passes upon earth for a stranger and a pilgrim, and who, without allowing his heart to rest upon it, regards it with indifference, and tramples it with contempt beneath his feet. A Friend of the Cross is an illustrious conquest of Jesus Christ, crucified upon Calvary, in union with His holy Mother; he is a Benoni or Benjamin, the "son of pain," the "son of the right hand," conceived in His sorrowing Heart, born into the world from His pierced right side, and all-empurpled with His Blood. Owing to his origin of blood, he can only breathe crosses, blood, and death to the world, the flesh, and sin, in order to be all hidden here below with Jesus Christ in God. Lastly, a perfect Friend of the Cross is a true "Christopher," or rather another Jesus Christ, so that he can say with truth, "*Vivo jam non ego, vivet vero in me Christus*—I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Are you, by your actions, my dear friends of the Cross, such as your great name implies, or at least, have you a true desire, and a true will to become so, by the grace of God, under the shadow of the Cross of Calvary, and of our Lady of Pity? Are you taking the means necessary for this end? Have you entered into the true path of life, which is the strait and thorny way of Calvary? Are you not, without thinking of it, in the broad road of the world, which is the way of perdition? Do you know well, that there is a way which seemeth right and safe unto a man, but which leadeth unto death? Do you distinguish well the voice of God

and of His grace, from that of the world and of nature? Do you hear well the voice of God, our good Father, who after having given His triple curse to all those who follow the concupiscences of the world, *Vae, vae, vae habitantibus in terra*, cries lovingly to you, whilst He stretches out His arms, "*Separamini, populo meus*," be ye separated, My chosen people, dear Friends of the Cross of My Son, be ye separated from the worldly, who are accursed of My Majesty, excommunicated by My Son, and condemned by My Holy Spirit. Take heed that you "walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the chair of pestilence." Come ye out of the great and infamous Babylon, listen only to the voice, follow only in the footprints of My well-beloved Son, Whom I have given to be your Way, your Truth, your Life, and your Model—"*ipsum audite*." Do you hear this loving Jesus, Who cries to you laden with His cross, "*Venite post me*—Come ye after Me;" "he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness;" "*confidite, ego vici mundum*,—have confidence, I have overcome the world."

You see, my dear Brothers of the Confraternity, there are two sides or parties, which present themselves every day, that of Jesus Christ, and that of the world; that of our loving Saviour is on the right hand, as you mount up to heaven, by a narrow road, straitened more than ever by the corruption of the world. Our Good Master is at its head, marching barefoot, His Head crowned with thorns, His body all bleeding, and laden with a heavy cross; there is only a handful of men to follow Him, although they are the bravest who do so, because His gentle voice is not heard amid the tumult of the world, and few there are who have the courage to follow Him in His

poverty, His sufferings, His humiliations, and His other crosses, which we must needs bear in His service all the days of our life. On the left is the party of the world, or of the devil, and it is the most numerous, the most magnificent, and the most brilliant, at least in appearance. All the fashionable world are there, and great is the crowd, although the roads are broad, and widened more than ever by the multitude which pours through them like a torrent; for the roads are strewn with flowers, bordered by pleasures and amusements, covered with gold and silver.

On the right hand, the little flock which follows Jesus Christ, speaks only of tears, penances, prayers, and contempt of the world; continually may you hear these words interrupted by sobs, "Let us suffer, let us weep, let us fast, let us pray, let us hide ourselves, let us humble ourselves, let us become poor, let us mortify ourselves; for he who has not the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of the Cross, is none of His; those who are Jesus Christ's have crucified their flesh with its concupiscences; we must be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, or be damned. "Courage," they cry, "Courage! if God be for us, in us, and before us, who can be against us? He that is in us is stronger than he who is in the world; the servant is not greater than his master, a moment of light tribulation worketh an eternal weight of glory. There are fewer of the elect than men think; it is only the violent who take the kingdom of heaven by storm: no one shall be crowned who has not striven lawfully, according to the Gospel, and not according to the fashions of the world. Let us then fight bravely, let us run quickly our course, that we obtain our prize, that we may gain our crown."

These are some of the words of God with which

the Friends of the Cross mutually encourage one another. Worldlings, on the other hand, in order to encourage themselves in malice, without scruple cry out every day, "Life, life, peace, peace, joy, joy." Let us eat, let us drink, let us sing, let us dance, let us play: God is good, God has not made us in order to damn us, God does not forbid us to amuse ourselves; we shall not be damned for that, no more scruples, then, "*non moriemini.*"

Bear in mind, my dear brothers, that our good Jesus is looking at you now, and is saying to every one of you singly: "See how I am abandoned by almost the whole world in the royal road of the cross: the blind idolators mock at My Cross as a folly, the obstinate Jews are scandalized at it as an object of horror, heretics break it in pieces and cast it down, as a thing worthy of contempt: but, what is worse, (and I cannot tell you this without tears in my eyes, and sorrow in my heart,) My children, whom I have brought up on My breast, and whom I have taught in My school, the members of My Body, whom I have quickened with My Spirit, have abandoned and despised me in becoming the enemies of My Cross, '*Numquid et vos vultis abire?*' Will you also go away and leave Me, by flying from My Cross like the worldlings, who in this are so many Antichrists, '*Antichristi multi?*' Will you, in order to conform to this present wicked world, despise the poverty of My Cross for a race after riches, avoid the pain of My Cross for the search of pleasure, hate the humiliatiations of My Cross for an ambitious thirst for honours? I have many apparent friends who protest that they love Me, and who, at bottom, hate Me, because they love not My Cross; I have many friends at My table, and very few at My Cross."

To this loving appeal of Jesus, let us rise above ourselves; let us not be seduced by our sensuality, as Eve was; let us only look to the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus Crucified; let us fly the corruption of the concupiscence of a corrupted world; let us love Jesus Christ in the proper way, that is to say, by following Him across all kinds of crosses. Let us meditate on those admirable words of our loving Master, which contain within them the whole perfection of the Christian life. "*Si quis vult venire post me, abneget supsum, et tollat crucem suam, obsequatur me.*"—"If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." All Christian perfection, indeed, consists in this: 1. To will to become a saint—"if any one will come after Me." 2. To renounce ourselves—"let him deny himself." 3. To suffer—"let him take up his cross." 4. To act—"and follow Me."

"*Si quis,*"—"if any one,"—any one, not many a one, in order to mark the small number of the elect, who really have the will to conform to Jesus Christ crucified by carrying their cross. The number of the elect is so small, so small that were we to know how small it is, we should faint away from grief. It is so small that were God to assemble them together, He would cry to them, as He did of old time by the mouth of His Prophet: "*Congregamini unus et unus,*—gather yourselves together, one by one, one from this province, one from that kingdom."

"*Si quis vult,*"—if any one has a true will, an absolute will, a will determined not by nature, or custom, or self-love, or interest, or human respect, but by the all-victorious grace of the Holy Ghost, who gives Himself not to every one.—*Non omnibus datum est nosse mysterium.* The knowledge

of the mystery of the cross is in practice given but to few. A man who would mount up Calvary, and suffer himself to be laid upon the cross with Jesus, in the midst of his own country, must be a brave man, a hero, a determined man, a man raised up in God; he must tread under his feet as so much litter, the world and hell, his own body and his own will; he must be determined to leave everything, undertake everything and suffer everything, for Jesus Christ. Know, dear Friends of the Cross, that those amongst you who have not this determination, are walking, so to speak, on one leg, are flying with one wing, and are not worthy to be of your number, because they are not worthy to be called Friends of the Cross, which we must have together with Jesus Christ, *corde magno et animo volenti.* A half-will of this kind is enough to spoil the whole flock, like a sheep that has the scab. If some such sheep has entered into your sheepfold, through the evil door of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ Crucified, let it be chased away as a wolf from the sheep.

"*Si quis vult post me venire*"—if any one will come after Me, who am so humble and annihilated that I became as a worm and no man, "*ego sum vermis et non homo:*" after Me, who came into the world for no other end but to embrace the cross, "*ecce venio;*" and to place it in the midst of My Heart, "*in medio cordis;*" and to love it from My youth upwards, "*hanc amavi a juventute meu;*" and to sigh after it my whole life long, "*quomodo co-arctor;*" and to carry it with joy, and to prefer it to all the joys and delights of heaven and earth, *proposito sibi gaudio sustinuit crucem;* in a word, after Me who was not satisfied until I died in its divine embrace."

If any one then will come after Me, thus anni-

hilated and crucified, let him, like Me, glory only in the poverty, humiliations, and sufferings of My cross, "*abneget seipsum ;*" let him deny himself. Far from the company of the Friends of the Cross be those proud sufferers, those worldly wise, those great geniuses and strong minds who are self-opinionated and puffed up with their own lights and their own talents; far from here be those babblers, who make a great noise, and bring forth no fruit but vanity; far from here be those proud devotees who bear about them everywhere the egotism of proud Lucifer, "*non sum sicut ceteri ;*" who cannot suffer to be found fault with, without excusing themselves, or to be attacked without defending themselves, or to be humbled without exalting themselves! Take heed not to admit into your company those delicate and sensual men who dread the least prick, and who cry out and complain at the least pain, who have never relished a hair-shirt or a discipline, or other instruments of penance, and who mingle with their fashionable devotions a sort of plastered up and refined delicacy and want of mortification.

"*Tollat Crucem Suam ;*" let him take up his cross: "*Suam,*" his own. Let him, let this man, (or that rare woman, "*de ultimis finibus pretium ejus,*" whom the whole earth from end to end could not purchase,) take up with joy, embrace with burning zeal, and carry bravely on his shoulders his own cross, and not that of another; his own cross, which by my wisdom I have made for him with "number, weight and measure;" his own cross, the four dimensions of which I have arranged with My own hand in great justness, that is to say, its thickness, its length, its breadth and its depth; his own cross, which I have cut from a portion of that which I carried Myself on Calvary, out of the infinite love which I bore him;

his own cross, which is the richest present I can make to My Elect on earth; his own cross, composed in its thickness of the loss of goods, and humiliations, and contempt, and sorrows, and pain, and sicknesses, and spiritual suffering, which in My Providence must happen to him every day until his death; his own cross, compared in its length of a certain number of months or days, during which he must be laden with calumny, or extended on a sick bed, or reduced to beggary, or become a prey to temptations, dryness, desolation and other afflictions of the spirit; his own cross, composed in its breadth of all the hardest and most bitter trials, whether on the part of friends, or of servants, or of relations; his own cross, in a word, composed in its depth of most hidden sufferings with which I will afflict him, without his being able to find consolation in creatures, who even, by My order, will turn their backs upon *him*, and unite with Me, in order to make *him* suffer.

Tollat, let him take up—that is to say, let him not drag it along, or tremble under its burden, or lessen it, or hide it; but let him carry it high in his hand, without impatience, or grief, without complaint, or voluntary murmuring, without sharing it with another, or looking to nature for relief, without shame or human respect. *Tollat*, let him place it on his forehead, and say with St. Paul: *Mihi absit gloriari, nisi in Cruce Domini Nostri Jesu Christi!* "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, my Master." Let him carry it on his shoulders after the example of Jesus Christ, that this cross may become to him the weapon of his conquests, and the sceptre of his empire, *imperium principatus ejus super humerum ejus;* "and the government is upon his shoulder;" in a word, let him place it in his heart by love, in order to make it a burning

bush, burning night and day for the pure love of God without consuming.

"*Crucem*," the Cross, let him carry it, because there is nothing so needful, and so useful, and sweet, nor so glorious as to suffer somewhat for Jesus Christ. And indeed, dear friends of the Cross, you are all sinners; there is not one amongst you who does not deserve hell, and I more than any one. Our sins must be punished in this world, or in the next; if they are punished in this, they will not be punished in the next; if God punish them in this world in concert with ourselves, the punishment will be full of love; it will be mercy which reigns in this world which will chastise them, and not rigorous justice; the chastisement will be light and momentary, accompanied with sweetness and merits, and followed by recompense both in time and in eternity. But if the chastisement necessary for the sins which we have committed be reserved for the next world, it will be the avenging justice of God, Who tries everything by fire and blood, which will punish us! Terrible punishment! *horrendum!* unspeakable, incomprehensible! "*quis novit potestatem iræ ejus?*" "Who knoweth the power of His wrath?" Punishment without mercy, *judicium sine misericordia*, without pity, without relief, without merit, without limits, without end. Yes, without end; that mortal sin of a moment, which you have committed, that bad and voluntary thought which has escaped your memory, that word which the wind has carried away, that little action against the law of God, which lasted such a little while, will be punished for eternity, as long as God is God, with the demons in hell; and the God of vengeance will have no pity on your fearful torments, on your tears and groans, even though they be loud enough to rend the rocks. To suffer

for ever, and for ever, without merit, without mercy, and without end! Do we think of this, my dear brothers and sisters, when we have to suffer some little pain in this world? How fortunate then we are to make so happy an exchange of an eternal and unfruitful pain for one that is pressing and meritorious by carrying this cross with patience! How many of our debts remain unpaid! How many sins have we committed for the expiation of which, even after bitter contrition and sincere confession, we shall have to suffer in purgatory for centuries, because we have been content in this world with a few very light penances! Ah! let us pay in this world willingly, by carrying well our cross, for everything in the next world is rigorously paid, even to the last farthing, even to an idle word. If we could only snatch from the devil the book of death, in which he has marked all our sins, and the punishment which is due to them, what an immense "sum total" we should find, and how delighted we should be to suffer whole years here below, rather than suffer for a single day in the world to come!

Do you not flatter yourselves, my friends of the Cross, that you are the friends of God, or wish to become so? Make up your mind, then, to drink of the chalice, which you must drink of, if you would become the friends of God: *Calicem Domini biberunt, et amici Dei facti sunt.* The well-beloved Benjamin had the chalice, and his other brothers had only the corn; the great favourite of Jesus Christ (St. John) had the Heart of Christ, and went up Mount Calvary, and drank of the chalice. *Potestis bibere calicem?* It is good to desire the glory of God, but to desire and to pray for it, without wishing to suffer everything, is a folly and an extravagant prayer, *Nescitis quid petatis...oportet per multas tribulationes; oportet,*

we must, it is a necessity; it is indispensable; we must enter through many tribulations and crosses into the kingdom of God. It is with reason that you glory in being the sons of God, glory then in the scourgings, which your good Father has given you, and will give you for the future, for the good father chastises His children. If you are not of the number of His well-beloved sons, you are, O what misfortune! O what a thunderclap to hear! you are, as St. Augustine says, of the number of the reprobate. He who mourns not in this world, as a pilgrim and a stranger, will never rejoice in another world as a citizen of heaven, says the same St. Augustine. If God the Father does not send you from time to time some good crosses, it is because He does not care for you, because He is angry with you; because He looks upon you only as strangers outside His house, and no longer under His protection, or as bastard children, who, not deserving to share their Father's heritage, deserve neither care nor correction.

Friends of the Cross, disciples of a crucified God, the mystery of the Cross is a mystery unknown to the Gentiles, rejected by the Jews, and despised by heretics and bad Catholics; but it is the great mystery which you must learn to practise in the school of Jesus Christ, and which you can only learn in His school. You will search in vain through all the academies of antiquity for one philosopher who taught it; you will consult in vain the light of sense and reason; it is only Jesus Christ who can teach you, and make you relish this mystery, by His victorious grace. Try, therefore, to become skilful in this supereminent science under so great a Master, and you will learn all other sciences as well, for all are eminently contained in this: it is our divine and

mysterious theology, and our philosopher's stone, which changes, through patience, the gross into precious metals, the sharpest pain into delight, poverty into riches, the deepest humiliations into glory. He amongst you, who knows best how to carry his cross, even though besides this he should not know even the first letters of the alphabet, is the most learned of you all. Hear what the great St. Paul says, who, on his return from the third heaven, where he learnt the mysteries which are hidden even from the angels, cries out that he knows nothing and wishes to know nothing but Jesus Crucified. Rejoice, then, thou poor simple man, or thou poor woman without intellect or learning; if thou knowest how to suffer joyfully, thou wilt know more than a doctor of the Sorbonne, who does not know how to suffer as well as thou! You are all members of Jesus Christ, what an honour! But what a necessity of suffering as such! The Head is crowned with thorns, shall the member be crowned with roses? The Head is buffeted and covered with dirt on the road to Calvary, shall the member be covered with perfumes, and sit upon a throne? The Head has no pillow on which to rest, shall the members delicately repose upon feathers and down? It would be a monstrous unheard-of thing! No, no, my dear companions of the Cross, be not deceived; those Christians whom you see on all sides, fashionably adorned, delicate to a degree, dignified and important to excess, are not the true disciples, nor the true members of Jesus Crucified: you would wrong your Head who is crowned with thorns, and the truth of the Gospel, by believing the contrary. O my God! what phantoms of Christians, who believe themselves to be the members of the Saviour, and who are all the while His most treacherous persecutors; because, whilst with

their hand they make the sign of the cross, they are the enemies of the cross in their heart! If you are led by the same spirit, if you live the same life as Jesus Christ, your thorn-crowned Head, you must expect only thorns, scourgings, nails, in a word, you must look only for the cross, because the disciple must be treated as his Master, and the member as its Head; and if God offered for your choice, as He offered to St. Catherine of Sienna, a crown of thorns, and a crown of roses, choose with her the crown of thorns, without hesitating, and press it down upon your head that you may resemble Jesus Christ.

You are not ignorant that you are the living temple of the Holy Ghost, and that you are to be placed as so many living stones, by the God of love, in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem; you must expect then to be hewn, and cut, and chiseled with the hammer and chisel of the cross; otherwise you will remain as rough stones, which are good for nothing, but to be despised and thrown away. Take heed not to wince under the hammer which strikes you, and have an eye to the chisel which cuts you, and to the hand which shapes you. It may be that the skilful and loving Architect wishes to make of you the chief stones of His eternal edifice, and the fairest statues in His kingdom. Let Him, then, do it; He loves you, He knows what He is doing, He has had experience; all His blows are skilful, and straight, and loving; He never misses, unless you cause Him to do so by your impatience. The Holy Ghost compares the cross at one time to a winnowing fan, which clears the good grain from the straw and dust; suffer yourselves, then, without resistance, like the grain before the winnowing fan, to be tossed about and shaken; it is the Good Householder Who is winnowing, and you

will soon be in His garner. At another time He likens it to a fire which takes away the rust from the iron by the keenness of its flames; our God is a consuming fire, Who dwells in a soul by the cross in order to purify it, without consuming it, as of old time in the burning bush; then again He likens it to the crucible of a forge, in which the pure gold is refined, and the false gold vanishes in smoke, the good by undergoing steadily the trial of fire, the false, by rising up in smoke against the flames; it is in the crucible of tribulation and temptation that the true friends of the cross are purified by their patience, whilst their enemies pass away in smoke by their impatience and their murmurs.

Look, my dear friends of the Cross, look before you at the great crowd of witnesses, who prove, without saying a word, the truth of what I am saying to you. Look, as it were, in passing, at just Abel, who was slain by his brother; at just Abraham, who was a stranger in the land; at just Lot, who was driven from his country; at just Jacob, who was persecuted by his brother; at just Tobias, who was struck blind; at just Job, who was brought down to poverty, and humbled and covered with sores from his feet to his head. Look at so many apostles and martyrs empurpled in their blood; so many virgins and confessors, poor, humbled, exiled, opposed, who all cry out with St. Paul, "Look at Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith;" that faith which we had in Him and in His cross, for He Himself had to enter through His cross into His glory. See by the side of Jesus Christ, that sharp sword, which pierces to the bottom of the tender and innocent Heart of Mary, who had never known sin, either original or actual. O, how much I could say in this place upon the Passion of both, in

order to show that what we have to suffer is as nothing compared with what they suffered! After their sufferings, which of us dare exempt himself from carrying his cross? Which of us will not fly swiftly to the place where he knows that the cross awaits him? Which of us will not cry out with St. Ignatius, martyr: "Let fire and gibbet, and wild beasts, and all the torments of the devil come down upon me, if only I may possess Jesus Christ."

Now, if you will not suffer patiently and carry your cross with resignation, like the predestinate, you will have to carry it with murmuring and impatience, like the reprobate; you will be like to those two animals which dragged the ark of the covenant, "lowing as they went;" you will imitate Simeon of Cyrene, who put his hand to the very cross of Jesus Christ in spite of himself, and did nothing but murmur whilst he carried it. It will happen to you, in a word, as it happened to the bad thief, who from the height of his cross fell into the depths of the abyss. No, no, this accursed earth on which we live cannot make us happy; we cannot see clearly in this land of darkness; there is no perfect peace on this stormy sea; we are never without combats in this place of temptation and on the field of battle; we are never without wounds on this earth covered with thorns; on it both the predestinate and the reprobate must carry their cross either willingly or unwillingly. Keep in mind these four lines:

"Choisis une des croix que tu vois au Calvaire
Choisis bien sagement; car il est nécessaire,
De souffrir comme un Saint, ou comme un pénitent,
Ou comme un réprouvé qui n'est jamais content.

"Three crosses stand on Calvary's saving height,
Make thou thy choice, and see thou choose aright,
With Christ the Holy One, or His repentant thief,
Not with the lost one in his endless grief."

That is to say, if you will not suffer joyfully, like Jesus Christ, or patiently like the good thief, you will have to suffer in spite of yourself, like the bad thief; you will have to drink the bitter chalice even to the dregs, without any consolation from grace, and you will have to carry the whole weight of your cross, without any powerful aid from Jesus Christ. You will even have to bear the fatal weight which the devil will add to your cross, by the impatience into which it will throw you, and after living here wretched with the bad thief upon earth, you will go and find him amid the flames.

But if, on the other hand, you suffer as you ought to suffer, the cross will become a very sweet yoke, which Jesus Christ will carry with you; it will become the two wings of the soul to enable it to fly to heaven; it will become a mast of a ship, which will carry you happily and easily into the harbour of salvation. Carry your cross patiently, and through this cross well carried, you will be enlightened in your spiritual darkness; for he who suffers nothing by temptation, knows nothing. Carry your cross joyously, and you will be inflamed with divine love; for no one lives without suffering, in the pure love of the Saviour. Roses are only gathered among thorns; the cross alone is the fuel of the love of God, as wood is of fire. Bear in mind, then, that beautiful sentence of the "Following of Christ:" "In proportion as thou dost violence to thyself, the greater progress wilt thou make in the love of God."

Look for nothing great from those delicate and indolent souls who refuse the cross when it

meets them, and who never with prudence of their own accord go in search of crosses for themselves; they are, as it were, untilled ground which will yield only thorns, because it has not been dug, or broken or stirred by a prudent labourer; they are but stagnant water, which is good neither for washing nor drinking. Carry your cross joyously, and you will find in it a strength of victory, which none of your enemies will be able to resist, and you will relish in it a charming sweetness, to which nothing else can be compared. Yes, my brothers, know that the true Paradise upon earth is to suffer something for Jesus Christ. Ask all the saints, and they will tell you that they have never tasted so delicious a banquet for the soul, as when they suffered the greatest torments. "Let all the torments of the devil come down upon me," said St. Ignatius, martyr. "*Aut pati, aut mori,*" said St. Teresa. "*Non mori sed pati,*" said St. Magdalen of Pazzi. "To suffer and to be despised for Thy sake," said St. John of the Cross; and how many others have held the same language, as we read in their lives. Take God at His word, my dear brothers; when we suffer joyously for God, the cross, says the Holy Ghost, is the object of all kinds of joy for all kinds of persons. The joy of the cross is greater than that of a poor man, who is laden with all kinds of riches; than the joy of a peasant who is raised to the throne; than the joy of a merchant who gains millions of money; than the joy of great generals, who gain many victories; than the joy of captives when delivered from their chains; in a word, imagine all the greatest joys on earth, and yet the joy of one who is crucified and suffers much, both contains them and surpasses them all.

Rejoice then, and leap for joy, when God shall give you a share in some good cross, for all that

is greatest in heaven, and even in God, falls upon you, without your perceiving it. Oh, what a great gift of God is the cross! If you understood it, you would have masses said, you would make novenas at the tombs of the saints, you would undertake long journeys, as the saints have done, to obtain from God this divine gift. The world calls it madness, disgrace, folly, indiscretion, imprudence; let these poor blinded men say what they like; their blindness, which makes them regard the cross in a human point of view, and all awry becomes a part of our glory, every time that they procure for us a few crosses by their contempt and their persecutions; by treating us thus, they give us jewels; they place us on a throne; they crown us with laurels; what do I say? all the riches, all the honours, all the sceptres, all the brilliant crowns of emperors and potentates are not to be compared with the joy of the cross, says St. John Chrysostom; "it surpasses the glory of an apostle and evangelist. Willingly would I leave heaven," says this holy man, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, "to suffer for the God of heaven. I would prefer a dungeon and a prison to the thrones of the empyreal, I do not even envy the glory of the seraphim so much as the greatest crosses. I esteem the gift of miracles, by which the devils are subdued, the elements are shaken, the sun is stopped in its course, life is given to the dead, far less than the honour of suffering for Christ." St. Peter and St. Paul are more glorious in their dungeon, with their chains upon their feet, than when they were raised to the third heaven, or received the keys of Paradise. And, indeed, is it not the cross which has given to Jesus Christ "a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth?"

The glory of a person who suffers much is so great, that heaven, and the angels, and men, and even the God of heaven, contemplate it with joy, as a most glorious spectacle, and if the saints could desire anything, it would be to return on earth and bear the cross. But if this glory is so great even on earth, what then will be the glory of the cross in heaven? Who can explain, or understand the eternal weight of glory, which a single moment in which the cross is well carried, worketh in us? Who can understand the glory, which a year, or sometimes a whole life, of crosses and sufferings, worketh in heaven? Assuredly, my dear friends of the cross, heaven is preparing for you something great, as you are told by a great saint, because the Holy Ghost unites you so closely together in that, from which the whole world flies away with so much care. Assuredly, God wishes to make as many saints, as there are men and women amongst you, who are friends of the cross, if you are faithful to your vocation, if you carry your cross as you ought, as Jesus Christ has carried it.

But it is not enough to suffer, the devil and the world have their martyrs, but we must suffer and carry our cross in the footprints of Jesus Christ; *sequatur me*, "let him follow Me," that is to say, we must carry the cross as He carried it, and here are the rules for doing so, which you must keep:

1. Never procure for yourselves crosses expressly, and through your own fault; we must not do evil that good may come; we must not, without especial inspiration, do things badly, in order to draw down upon us the contempt of men; we should rather imitate Jesus Christ, of whom it was said that "He did all things well," not out of self-love or vanity, but to please God and to gain our neighbour. But if you discharge your duties in the best manner you are able, you will not fail to meet

with contradictions, and persecutions, and contempt, which God in His providence will send you against your will, and without your option.

2. If by performing some indifferent action, your neighbour take scandal, though without reason, abstain from it out of charity, so as to remove all scandal from little ones; and this heroic act of charity which you thus perform, will be worth infinitely more than that which you were doing, or wished to do. If, however, the good which you are doing is necessary, or useful to your neighbour, and some pharisee, or evil-minded person, take scandal without reason, then consult some prudent man, in order to know whether what you are doing be really necessary and useful to the generality of your neighbours, and if he judge it to be so, continue it, and let men say what they like, provided that they let you do it; simply answering as our Lord answered certain of His disciples, who came to tell Him that the Scribes and Pharisees were scandalised at His words: "Let them alone, they are blind."

3. Although some saints and great men have prayed for, gone in search of, and even procured by ridiculous actions, crosses, contempt, and humiliations, let us simply adore and admire the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost in their souls, and let us humble ourselves at the sight of so sublime a virtue, without daring to fly so high, being in comparison with these swift eagles and roaring lions, but as poor hens with drenched plumage, and as dead dogs.

4. You may, however, indeed you ought to pray for the wisdom of the cross, which is a savoury and experimental knowledge of the truth, which causes us to see in the light of faith, the most hidden mysteries, amongst others that of the cross, a gift which is only obtained after great

labour, profound humiliations, and fervent prayers. If you have need of that spirit of mind, which bears the heaviest crossses with courage, of that good and sweet spirit, which gives a relish, in the superior part of the soul, to the most disagreeable bitternesses, of that sound and right spirit, which seeks God alone, of that knowledge of the cross, which contains all things in itself, in a word, of that infinite treasure, the good use of which renders a soul partaker of the friendship of God, pray for wisdom, pray for it without ceasing, and with energy, without hesitation, without fear of not obtaining it, and you will obtain it without fail, and afterwards you will see clearly, by experience, how it happened that the cross is something to be desired, sought after, and relished.

5. When through ignorance, or even through your own fault, you have made some mistake, which procures you some cross, humble yourselves thereat at once in yourselves, under the powerful hand of God, without troubling about it of your own will, and say, for example, inwardly, "*See, O Lord, another trick of my trade ;*" and if there has been any sin in the fault which you have committed, take the humiliation which arises from it, as its punishment ; and if there has been no sin, as a humiliation of your pride. Often, and indeed very often, God permits His greatest servants, who are highest in His grace, to fall into very humiliating faults, in order to humble them in their own eyes, and before men, and in order to take away from them the sight, and proud thought of the graces He has bestowed upon them, and of the good which they are doing, so that "no flesh," as the Holy Ghost says, "may glory before God."

6. Be well persuaded that all that is in us has been wholly corrupted through the sin of Adam, and through our own actual sins, not only the

senses of our body, but all the powers of our soul; and that as soon as our corrupt mind regard any gift of God within us, reflecting on it, and taking pleasure in the reflection, then that gift or grace of God becomes all soiled and corrupt, and God turns His divine eyes away from it. If the looks and thoughts of the mind of man spoil in this manner the best actions, and the most divine of gifts, what shall we say of the acts of the natural will, which are still more corrupt than those of the mind? After that, we must not be astonished if God takes pleasure in hiding His own in the secrecy of His countenance, that they may not be soiled by the looks of men and by their natural knowledge; and to hide them thus, what does not a jealous God permit, and what does He not do? How many humiliations will He not procure for them? Into how many faults will He not allow them to fall? By how many temptations will He not suffer them to be attacked, as He suffered St. Paul? In what uncertainty, darkness, perplexity, does He not leave them? O how wonderful is God in His saints, and in the ways by which He leads them to humility and sanctity!

7. Beware of believing, like proud devotees who are full of themselves, that your crosses are great, that they are trials of your fidelity, and proofs of a singular love of God in your behalf. This source of spiritual pride is very subtle and delicate, but it is full of poison. You ought to believe—1. That your pride makes you mistake straws for beams, scratches for wounds, a rat for an elephant, a little word in the air, a mere nothing at all, for a dreadful injury and a cruel treason. 2. That the crosses which God sends you are rather loving punishments of your sins, as indeed they are, than marks of special favour.

3. That whatever cross or whatever humiliation He may send you, He still spares you to an infinite degree, when you consider the number and enormity of your crimes, which you ought only to look at through the holiness of God, Who suffers nothing impure, and which you have attacked across a dying God, when laden with suffering by reason of your sins, and across an eternal hell, which you have deserved a thousand, and perhaps a hundred thousand times. 4. That in the patience with which you suffer, you are mixing up far more of the human and the natural than you think: for example, those little contrivances of human nature; that secret seeking after consolation; those natural disclosures of the heart to your friends, perhaps even to your director; those excuses so finely drawn, and so ready; those complaints, or rather I should say that detraction, so well turned, and so charitably spoken, of those who have wronged you; that constant recurrence to your misfortunes, and the subtle complacency you take in them; that belief worthy of Lucifer, that you are really something great. I should never have done, were I to describe all the ins and outs, the turns and windings, of nature, even in suffering.

8. Draw profit and even advantage from little sufferings as well as from great. God does not look so much at the suffering as at the way in which we suffer. To suffer much, and to suffer badly, is the suffering of the damned; to suffer much, and with courage, but for a bad cause, is the suffering of one of the devil's martyrs; to suffer little or much, and to suffer it for God, is to suffer as a saint. If it were true to say that we can make choice of crosses, it is especially those which are little and obscure, compared with those which are great and notable, that we should

choose. Nature in its pride may pray for, seek after, and even choose and embrace, great and notable crosses; but to choose, and joyously to carry, small and obscure crosses, this can only be the effect of a great grace, and of great fidelity to God. Act, then, as the merchant acts in his counting-house. Try to make profit out of everything; try not to lose the least particle of the true cross, were it only the prick of a pin or of a fly, some little contradiction on the part of a neighbour, some little wrong done by mistake, some trifling loss of money, some little trouble of the soul, some little weakness of body, some little pain in the limbs. Make profit out of everything, like the grocer in his shop, and you will soon become rich in God, as he becomes rich in money, adding penny upon penny to his counter. Whenever you are crossed in the least way, say: "Blessed be God; my God, I thank you!" And then conceal in the memory of God, who is as it were your counter, the cross which you have just gained, and afterwards think no more about it, except to say: "Thanks be to God!" or "God be merciful!"

9. When you are told to love the cross, it is not meant that you should feel a sensible love, which is impossible to nature; you must distinguish then three kinds of love; sensible love, the love of the reason, and faithful and supreme love; or, in other words, the love of the lower part of man, which is the flesh; the love of the higher part, which is the reason; and the love of the highest part of all, or supreme point of the soul, which is the understanding enlightened by faith. God does not ask of you to love the cross with the desire of the flesh; for this is wholly corrupt and criminal, everything proceeding from it is corrupt, and itself cannot be even subjected by itself to

the will of God, and to His crucifying Law. This is why our Lord, speaking of it in the Garden of Olives, cried out: "My Father, not my will but Thine be done." If the lower part of the man in Jesus Christ, although it was holy, was unable to love the cross without some interruption, how much more will our lower part, being altogether corrupt, resist it. We may indeed sometimes experience even sensible joy when we suffer, as many of the saints have done; but this joy comes not from the flesh, although it is in the flesh; it comes from the higher part, which is so filled with this divine joy of the Holy Ghost, that it causes it to overflow upon the lower part; so that at that moment even the most crucified of men may say: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God!" There is another love of the cross, which I call of the reason, and which is in the upper part of man; this love is altogether spiritual, and as it springs from the knowledge of the happiness of suffering for God, it is perceptible and even perceived by the soul, which is inwardly rejoiced by it and strengthened. But this rational and even perceptible love, although good and very good, is not always necessary, in order to suffer joyously and divinely. This is why there is another love of the supreme point of the soul, as the masters of the spiritual life tell us, or of the understanding, as the philosophers say, by which, without feeling any joy in the senses, without perceiving any rational love in the soul, we love notwithstanding, and relish by the light of pure faith, the cross which we carry, although it often happens that our lower part is in a state of war and alarm, and that it groans, and complains, and mourns, and tries to comfort itself by saying with Jesus Christ, "My Father, not My will, but Thine be done;" or with the

Holy Virgin: "Behold the slave* of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word." It is with one of these two loves of the higher part of the soul that we must love and relish the cross.

10. Make up your minds, then, dear Friends of the Cross, to suffer all sorts of crosses, without exception and without choosing; all poverty, all injustice, all loss, all sickness, all humiliation, all contradiction, all calumny, all dryness, all desolation, all interior and exterior pain; saying always, "My heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready." Prepare, then, to be forsaken by men and angels, and like God Himself, to be persecuted, envied, betrayed, calumniated, discredited, and abandoned by all; to suffer hunger, thirst, beggary, nakedness, banishment, prison, the gibbet, and every kind of punishment, although you have not deserved them for the crimes which are laid to your charge. Lastly, imagine that, after having lost your property and your honour, after having been turned out of your house, like Job, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, you are, like St. Elizabeth, cast into the mud, or, like Job, thrown upon a dunghill, stinking and covered with ulcers, without even a piece of linen to cover your sores, or a morsel of bread to eat, which would not be refused to a horse or dog, and that with all these extreme evils, God should leave you a prey to all the temptations of the devils, without pouring into your soul the least sensible consolation. Believe firmly, that this would be the summit of divine glory, and of true happiness, for a true perfect Friend of the Cross.

11. In order to help you to suffer well, form a holy habit of considering four things:—First, the

* The French word is "esclave." See note on page 31.—*Trans.*

Eye of God, who, like a great king, from a high tower, looks down with complacency on his soldier, engaged in battle, and encourages him with words of praise. What is it that God regards on earth? Is it kings and emperors on their thrones? He looks on them often with contempt; great victories of the armies of the state, precious stones, everything, in a word, which is great in the eyes of men? That which is great in the eyes of men is an abomination before God. What, then, is it that He regards with pleasure and complacency, and of which He asks for news from the angels and even from the devils? It is a man who fights for God, with fortune, with the world, with hell, and with himself, a man who carries joyfully his cross. Hast thou not seen upon the earth a great marvel, which all heaven is looking at with wonder, says the Lord to Satan: "Hast thou not seen My servant Job, who suffers for Me?"

Secondly, consider the Hand of this powerful Lord, who sends to us all natural evils, from the greatest down to the least. The same Hand which has laid low an army of a hundred thousand men, causes the leaf to fall from the tree, and the hair from your head; the Hand which touched Job so cruelly touches you gently, by the evil which it sends you. By the same Hand He forms day and night, the sun and darkness, good and evil; He has permitted the sins which give you annoyance, not that He has created evil, but that He permits its action. Thus, when you meet with some Semei who reviles you, and throws stones at you, as happened to King David, say to yourselves, "Let us not avenge ourselves; let him alone, for the Lord has bid him act thus." Let each one of you say, "I know that I have deserved all sorts of outrages, and it is with justice that God punishes me. Stop, O my arms,

and strike not; and thou, O my tongue, say not a word; for this man or woman who reviles me or wrongs me, is an ambassador from God, who comes on the part of His mercy to take loving vengeance on my sins." Say one to another, "Let us not irritate His justice, by usurping the rights of His vengeance; let us not despise His mercy, by resisting His loving scourging, for fear lest His mercy keep us in reserve for the vengeance of His pure justice in eternity." Consider how, on one hand, an all-powerful, and infinitely prudent God bears you up, whilst He strikes you with the other; with one hand He mortifies, and quickens with the other; He bringeth low and raiseth up, and with both His arms He reaches from one end of your life to the other, "sweetly and mightily;" sweetly, by not permitting you to be tempted or afflicted above your strength; mightily, by seconding you with powerful grace, which corresponds to the strength and duration of the temptation and affliction; mightily, again, by becoming Himself, as He declares through His holy Church, your support on the brink of the precipice, near which you are, your companion on the road, from which you are wandering, your shade in the heat which is burning you up, your covering in the rain which is wetting you, and in the cold which is freezing you, your chariot in the weariness which is oppressing you, your help in adversity when it comes to you, your staff on the slippery way, and your harbour in the midst of ruin and of shipwreck.

Thirdly, consider the wounds and sufferings of Jesus Christ Crucified. He is saying to you Himself: "O all ye that pass by the way, the thorny way of the cross, by which I passed, look and see; look with the eye even of your body, and see with the eyes of your contemplation, if your

poverty, your nakedness, your being despised, your sufferings, your abandonment, are like unto Mine; look at Me, the Innocent One, and mourn, ye who are guilty!" The Holy Ghost requires of us, through the mouth of the apostles, to look in this way at Jesus Christ Crucified; He commands us to arm ourselves with this thought, which is more piercing, and more terrible to all our enemies, than all other weapons. When you are attacked by poverty, abjection, suffering, temptation, and other crosses, arm yourselves with a buckler, a cuirass, a helmet, a two-edged sword, that is to say, with the thought of Jesus Christ and of Him crucified; in Him you will find the solution of every difficulty and victory over every enemy.

Fourthly, look up *on high*, to the fair crown which is waiting for you in heaven, if you carry your cross well. This was the recompense which held up the patriarchs and prophets in their faith and persecutions, which has encouraged the apostles and martyrs in their labours and torments. "We would rather," said the patriarchs with Moses, "we would rather be afflicted with the people of God than have the pleasure of sin for a time." "We suffer great persecutions on account of the reward," said the prophets with David. "We are, as it were, men appointed to death; we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, by our sufferings, being made the offscouring of the world," said the apostles and martyrs with St. Paul, "by reason of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which this momentary and light tribulation worketh in us." "Let us lift up our eyes to the angels above our heads, who cry to us." Beware of losing the crown assigned to the cross which has been given you if you carry it well. If you do not bear it

well, another will bear it as it ought to be borne, and will carry off your crown." "Fight bravely, by suffering patiently," say all the saints to us, "and you will receive an eternal kingdom." Lastly, let us listen to Jesus Christ, who says to us: "To him that shall suffer and overcome through patience, will I give My reward." Let us look *below*, to the place which we deserve, and which is waiting for us in hell, with the bad thief and the reprobate, if we suffer like them with murmuring, with spite, and with vengeance. Let us cry out with St. Augustine, "Burn, O Lord, and cut away, in this world, in punishment of my sins, provided that Thou pardon them in eternity."

12. Never, of your own free will, complain or murmur of the creatures of which God makes use to afflict you. Distinguish, therefore, between three kinds of complaint in misfortune. The first is involuntary and natural; it is that of the body, which groans, and sighs, and complains, and weeps, and laments. When the soul, as I have said, is resigned to the will of God in its higher part, there is no sin. The second is that of the reason: it is when we complain and make known our misfortune to those who may be able to remedy it, as to a superior or a physician; this kind of complaint may be imperfect, if too eagerly made, but it is not sin. The third kind is sinful; it is when we complain of our neighbour in order to rid ourselves of the evil which he makes us suffer, or to avenge ourselves, or when we complain of the pain which we are suffering, by consenting to this complaint, and adding to it impatience and murmuring.

13. Never receive any cross without kissing it humbly out of gratitude; and when God, Who is all good, shall have favoured you with some cross greater than usual, thank Him for it in a special

manner, and try to get others to thank Him for it as well, after the example of that poor woman, who having lost her all through an unjust lawsuit, which had been brought against her, immediately caused a Mass to be said, with ten sous which remained to her, in order to thank God for the good fortune He had sent her.

14. If you wish to render yourself worthy of receiving the crosses which may come to you without your participation, and which are the best of all, lade yourselves with those which are voluntary, under the advice of a good director. For example, do you happen to have in your possession some piece of useless furniture to which you feel some attachment? Give it to the poor, and say to yourselves: "Shall we have what is superfluous, when Jesus is so poor?" Have you a dislike to some kind of food, to some act of virtue, to some bad smell? Taste, practise, smell, conquer yourselves. Do you love some person or some object too tenderly and eagerly? Absent yourselves, deprive yourselves, put yourselves at a distance from that which pleases you. Have you a natural inclination to see, or to act, or to make a figure, or to go to any place? Curb yourselves, be silent, hide yourselves, turn away your eyes. Have you naturally a dislike for any object, or any person? Take it, go to him, overcome yourselves. If you are truly Friends of the Cross, love, which is always ingenious, will enable you to find out in this way a thousand little crosses, with which you may insensibly enrich yourselves, without fear of vanity, which often mixes itself up with the patience with which more remarkable crosses are endured; and then, because you shall have been faithful over few things, our Lord, as He has promised, will place you over many things, that is to say, over many graces, which He will give you,

over many crosses, which He will send you, over much glory, which He will prepare for you hereafter.....

MONTFORT'S PRAYER FOR THE MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY GHOST.*

Be mindful, O Lord, be mindful of Thy Congregation which Thou hast possessed from the beginning, by thinking of it from all eternity; be mindful of that Congregation which Thou didst hold in Thy all-powerful Hand, when, by a word, Thou didst draw the universe out of nothing; and which Thou didst still hide in Thy Heart, when Thy Son, dying on the cross, consecrated it by His death, and entrusted it, as a precious charge, to the care of His most Holy Mother. *Memor esto Congregationis tuæ quam possedisti ab initio.*

Fulfil, O Lord, the designs of Thy mercy; raise up men of Thy right hand, such as Thou hast shown in prophetic vision, to some of the greatest of Thy servants, to St. Francis of Paola, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Catherine of Sienna, and to so many other great souls in the past age, and even in this age in which we live.

Memento. O Almighty God, be mindful of this company, and give to it the omnipotence of Thy Arm, which is not shortened, that it may come to light, and be born, and be guided to its perfec-

* Of this prayer Father Faber has said, that "since the Apostolical Epistles, it would be hard to find words that burn so marvellously;" and to this prayer he "earnestly refers all those who find it hard to keep up, under their numberless trials, the first fires of the love of souls."—(Preface to Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.)

tion. *Innova signa, immuta mirabilia, sentiamus adjutorium brachii tui.*

O great God, who out of lifeless stones canst raise up children unto Abraham, speak but one word in God, that good labourers may be sent out unto Thy harvest, and good missionaries to Thy Church.

Memento. God of goodness! be mindful of Thy former mercies, and for Thy mercy's sake be mindful of this congregation; be mindful of the repeated promises which Thou hast made us by Thy prophets and even by Thy Son, to hear us in our just demands. Be mindful of the prayers which Thy servants, both men and women, have made to Thee for so many ages; may their prayers, their sighs, their tears and their blood, rise up before Thy presence, and powerfully call down upon us Thy mercy; but, more than all, be mindful of Thy dear Son, *respice in faciem Christi Tui;* may Thy eyes behold His agony, His confusion, and His loving complaint in the Garden of Olives, when He said, "*Quæ utilitas in sanguine meo?*" His cruel death, and blood-shedding cry aloud to Thee for mercy, that by means of this congregation, His empire may be established on the ruins of that of His enemies.

Memento. Be mindful, O Lord, of this congregation, in the execution of Thy justice: *Tempus faciendi, Domine, dissipaverunt legem tuam;* it is time to do what Thou hast promised. Thy divine law is transgressed; Thy Gospel misunderstood; Thy religion abandoned; torrents of iniquity are deluging the whole earth, and are carrying away even Thy servants; all the earth is desolate: *Desolatione desolata est terra;* impiety is on the throne; Thy sanctuary is profaned; and the abomination of desolation is almost in the holy place. Wilt Thou then give up everything for

lost, O just Lord, Thou God of Vengeance? Shall all come to an end, like unto Sodom and Gomorrha? Wilt Thou be silent for ever? Must not Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven? must not Thy kingdom come? Hast not Thou shown beforehand to certain of Thy friends the future reward of Thy Church? Have not the Jews to be converted to the truth? Is not the Church waiting for this? Are not all the saints of heaven crying out to Thee: Justice, *Vindica.* Are not all the just on earth saying: *Amen veni, Domine?* Are not all creatures, even the most insensible, groaning under the weight of the innumerable sins of Babylon, and praying for Thy coming to re-establish all things? *Omnis creatura ingemiscit.*

Lord Jesus, *Memento Congregationis Tuæ.* Be mindful to give Thy Mother a new company, to renew, through her, all things, and to finish through Mary the years of grace as through her Thou didst begin them. *Da Matri Tuæ liberos, alioquin moriar.* Give children, give servants to Thy Mother, otherwise I die. *Da Matri Tuæ.* It is for Thy Mother that I ask. Be mindful of her womb and of her breasts, and refuse me not; be mindful of whom Thou art the Son, and hear me; be mindful of all she is to Thee, and of all Thou art to her, and fulfil my prayers. What is it that I ask of Thee? Nothing for myself, everything for Thy glory. What is that I ask? what Thou canst, and even, yes, I dare to say it, what Thou oughtest to grant me, Very God that Thou art, to Whom all power has been given in heaven and in earth, and who, like the best of all children, lovest infinitely Thy Mother. What is it that I ask? *Liberos.* Priests, free with Thy own freedom, detached from all things, without father, without mother, without brethren, without sisters,

without relations, according to the flesh, without friends according to the world, without goods, without cumbrance, without cares, and even without a will of their own. *Liberos.* Slaves of Thy love, and of Thy will, men according to Thy Heart, who, without a will of their own to soil them or to stop them, may do Thy whole will, and overthrow Thy enemies, as so many new Davids, with the staff of the cross and the sling of the holy rosary in their hands. *In baculo Cruce et in virga Virgine.*

Liberos. Souls raised up from earth, and full of heavenly dew, who, without hindrance, may fly on all sides under the breath of the Holy Ghost. These are they, in part, of whom Thy prophets had knowledge, when they asked, "*Qui sunt isti, qui sicut nubes volant? Ubi erat impetus spiritus, illuc gradiebantur.*"

Liberos. Men always ready at hand, always ready to obey, at the voice of their superiors, like Samuel, *præsto sum;* always ready to run and suffer everything with Thee, and for Thee, as the apostles; *eamus et moriamur cum illo.*

Liberos. True children of Mary, Thy holy Mother, begotten and conceived through her love, carried in her bosom, clinging to her breasts, nourished with her milk, brought up under her care, held up in her arms, and enriched with her graces.

Liberos. True servants of the Holy Virgin, who, as so many other Dominics, may everywhere fly with the flaming and burning torch of the Holy Gospel in their mouth, and the holy Rosary in their hand, and barking, like faithful hounds, against the wolves, which desire only to tear in pieces the flock of Jesus Christ, may burn like fires, and enlighten the darkness of the world like suns; and who, by the means of a true devotion to Mary,

that is to say, by a devotion which is interior, without hypocrisy, exterior without criticism, prudent without ignorance, tender without indifference, constant without fickleness, and holy without presumption, may crush wherever they go, the head of the old serpent, in order that the curse with which Thou hast cursed him, may be wholly fulfilled; *Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, inter semen tuum, et semen ipsius; et ipsa conteret caput tuum.*

It is true, great God! that the world will set snares for the heel of this mysterious woman, that is to say, for the little company of her children, who are to come towards the end of the world, and that there will be great enmities between this blessed posterity of Mary, and the accursed race of Satan; but it will be an enmity quite divine, and the sole enmity of which Thou art the Author.

Inimicitias ponam. But these combats and persecutions which the race of Belial will wage against the race of Thy holy Mother, will only serve to show forth more splendidly the power of Thy grace, the courage of their virtue, and the authority of Thy Mother, because to her Thou hast given, from the beginning of the world, the commission to crush that proud one by the humility of her heart. *Ipsa conteret caput tuum.*

Alioquin moriar. Would it not be better for me to die, than to see Thee, O my God, every day so cruelly offended, and with such impunity, and to see myself even every day in danger of being carried away by the torrents of iniquity which are every instant swelling higher and higher, without anything to oppose them? Ah! a thousand deaths would be easier for me to bear. Either send me help from heaven, or take away my soul. Yes, had I not the hope that Thou wouldst hear

me, sooner or later, a poor sinner, in the interests of Thy glory, as Thou hast already heard so many others, *iste pauper clamavit et Dominus exaudivit eum*, I could pray to Thee absolutely as the prophet prayed: *Tolle animam meam.*

But the confidence which I have in Thy mercy, makes me bold to say, with another prophet: *Non moriar, sed vivam et narrabo opera Domini*, "I shall not die, but live, and shall declare the works of the Lord," until the time when I shall say with Simeon: "*Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine.....in pace; quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum.*"

Memento. Holy Spirit, be mindful to bring forth, and form children of God, with Thy divine and faithful spouse, Mary. Thou hast formed the Head of the predestinate with her and in her; it is with her and in her that Thou art to form all His members; Thou engenderest no Divine Person in the Godhead; but it is Thou alone That formest all divine persons outside the Godhead, and all the saints who have ever been, or shall be, until the end of the world, are so many works of Thy love, united with Mary. The special reign of God the Father lasted until the deluge of water: the reign of Jesus Christ was ended by a deluge of blood; but Thy reign, Spirit of the Father and the Son, continues even now, and will be ended by a deluge of fire, of love, and of justice.

When shall come this deluge of the fire of pure love, which Thou art to kindle over all the earth, so sweetly and yet so vehemently, that all the nations, the Turks, the idolators, even the Jews, shall burn with it, and be converted? *Non est qui abscondat a calore ejus.*

Accendatur. May this divine fire, which Jesus Christ came to bring upon the earth, be kindled before Thou lightest up the fire of Thy wrath,

which shall reduce everything to ashes. *Emitte spiritum et creabuntur et renovabis faciem terræ.* Send forth That Spirit all of fire upon the earth, and create priests all on fire, by whose ministry the face of the earth may be renewed, and our Church reformed.

Memento Congregationis tuæ. It is a congregation, it is an assembly, it is an election, it is a choosing of the predestinate, which Thou art to bring about in the world, and from the world. *Ego elegi vos a mundo.* It is a flock of peaceful lambs which Thou art to gather from out many wolves; a company of chaste doves and royal eagles from out so many ravens; a swarm of honey-bees from out of so many hornets; a herd of nimble deer from out so many tortoises; a troop of bold lions amid so many timid hares. Ah! Lord, *congrega nos de nationibus;* gather us, unite us, that all glory may be given to Thy holy and powerful Name!

Thou hast foretold this illustrious company to Thy prophet, who speaks of it in terms very obscure, and very secret, but divine: *Pluviam voluntariam segregabis, Deus, hereditatæ tuæ, et infirmata est, tu vero perfecisti eam. Animalia tua habitabunt in ea. Parasti in dulcedine tua, pauperi, Deus. Dominus dabit verbum evangeligantibus virtute multa; Rex virtutum, dilecti, dilecti, et speciei domus dividere spolia. Si dormiatis inter medios cleros, pennæ columbæ deargentatæ et posteriora ejus in pallore auri. Dum discernit cœlestis reges super eam, nive dealbabuntur in Salmon; mons Dei, mons pingis, mons coagulatus, mons pinguis; ut quid suspicamini montes coagulatos? Mons in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare in eo, etenim Dominus habitabit in finem.* ("Thou shalt set aside for Thy inheritance a free rain, and it was weakened, but Thou hast

made it perfect. In it shall Thy animals dwell; in Thy sweetness, O God, Thou hast provided for the poor. The Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power. The King of power is of the beloved, of the beloved; and the beauty of the house shall divide spoils. If you sleep among the midst of lots, you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and the hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold. When He that is in heaven appointeth kings over her, they shall be whited with snow from Salmon. The mountain of God is a fat mountain, a curdled mountain, a fat mountain. Why suspect ye curdled mountains? A mountain in which God is well pleased to dwell, for there the Lord shall dwell unto the end."*)

What is this "free rain," O Lord, which Thou hast set aside and chosen for Thy weakened inheritance, if not those holy missionaries, children of Mary, Thy Spouse, whom Thou art to gather together and set aside for the good of Thy Church, which has become so weakened and soiled by the sins of her children?

What are these animals, and who are the poor who shall dwell in Thy inheritance, and who shall be fed on the sweetness of God, which Thou hast prepared for them, if not those poor missionaries, abandoned to Thy Providence, who shall abound to overflowing in Thy divine delights; if not those mysterious animals of Ezechiel, who shall have the human nature of man by their disinterested charity towards their neighbour; the courage of the lion, by their holy anger and their burning but prudent zeal against the demons, the children of Babylon; the strength of the ox, by their apostolic labours and their mortification of the flesh;

* Ps. lxvii. 10—17.

and lastly, the swiftness of the eagle by their contemplation in God.

Such are the missionaries, whom Thou shalt send forth into Thy Church; they shall have the eye of man for their neighbour, the eye of the lion for Thine enemies, the eye of the ox against themselves, and the eye of the eagle for Thee. These followers of the apostles shall preach *virtute multa, virtute magna* with great force and power, with power so great and so glorious that they will move the minds and hearts of men in the places where they shall preach. It is to them that Thou wilt give Thy word; *dabis verbum;* Thy very mouth and Thy wisdom, *dabo vobis os et sapientiam, cui non poterunt resistere omnes adversarii vestri,* "which none of Thy enemies will be able to resist."

It is amongst these Thy well-beloved, that Thou, O loving Jesus, wilt take Thy delight, as the King of power, for they will have no other end in all their missions, but to give Thee all the glory of the spoils which they shall take from Thy enemies. *Rex virtutum, dilecti, dilecti, et speciei domus dividere spolia.*

By their abandonment to Thy Providence, and their devotion to Mary, they shall have the silvered wings of the dove, *inter medios cleros, pennæ columbæ deargentate;* that is to say, purity of doctrine and of life: and their backs gilded, *et posteriora ejus in pallore auri;* that is to say, a perfect charity towards their neighbour in bearing his defects, and a just love for Jesus Christ in carrying His cross.

Thou alone, O Jesus, as King of heaven and King of kings, shalt set aside these missionaries, as so many kings, and make them whiter than the snow on the mountain of Salmon, the mountain of God, the rich and fruitful mountain, the strong and curdled mountain, the mountain in which

"God is well pleased to dwell, and where He shall dwell unto the end."

What is this mysterious mountain, O Lord God of truth, of which Thou tellest us such marvellous things, if not Mary Thy dear spouse, whose foundations Thou hast laid on the tops of the highest mountain? *Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis .....Mons in vertice montium.*

Happy, a thousand times happy will be the priests whom Thou hast so well chosen, and predestinated to dwell with Thee in this fruitful and divine mountain, that on it they may be made kings of eternity through their contempt of earth, and their contemplation in God, that there they may become whiter than snow through their union with Mary, Thy spouse, who is all-fair, all-pure, all-spotless, that there they may be enriched with the dew of heaven, and the fat things of earth, with all blessings of time and of eternity, with which Mary is wholly filled.

It is from the top of this mountain, that, like Moses, they shall launch forth; by their burning prayers, their darts against their enemies, either to overthrow them or convert them; it is upon this mountain that they all learn, from the very mouth of Jesus Christ, who dwells there for ever, the knowledge of His eight beatitudes; it is on this mountain of God that they shall be transfigured with Him, as He was on Thabor, that they shall die with Him, as He died on Calvary, and that they shall ascend into heaven with Him, as He ascended from the Mount of Olives.

Memento Congregationis tuæ. It is for Thee alone through Thy grace to gather this assembly; if man be the first to lay hand to this work, nothing will be done; if he mixes up his own with Thine, he will spoil everything, overthrow everything. *Tuæ Congregationis:* it is Thy work,

great God, *opus tuum fac*—do Thy divine work; gather together, and call Thy elect from every place in Thy dominion, and form one army against Thy enemies.

Behold, O Lord, Thou God of Hosts, the captains who form complete companies, the potentates who form numerous armies, the seamen who unite entire fleets, the merchants who meet together in such numbers in market-places and fairs. How many thieves, and wicked men, and drunkards, and libertines, meet together in crowds against Thee every day, so easily and so readily! A blow which is given, a drum which is beaten, a blunted sword-point which is shown to them, a dry branch of laurel which is promised them, a piece of yellow or white earthenware which is offered them: in three words, an honour which is but as a wreath of smoke, an interest of no value, a pitiful pleasure in some beast, which they have seen, such poor things as these, in an instant, bring thieves together, assemble soldiers, collect battalions, gather together merchants, fill houses and markets, and cover sea and land with a multitude of reprobates, who, although separated one from another, either by distance of place, or by difference of humour, or of interest, will, notwithstanding, all unite together, even to the death, to make war against Thee, under the standard and leadership of the devil.

And we, great God! although there is so much glory and profit, so much sweetness and advantage in serving Thee, hardly any one will take Thy side! Hardly a soldier will rank himself under Thy standard! Hardly a St. Michael can be found, to cry out of the midst of his brethren, in zeal for Thy glory: *Quis ut Deus?*

Ah! suffer me to cry aloud on all sides: Fire, fire, fire! help, help, help! fire in the house of

God, fire in the souls of men, fire in the sanctuary! help for our Brother whom they are murdering, help for our children who are being slain, help for our good Father Whom they are stabbing to the heart. *Qui Domini est jungater mihi:* let all the good priests throughout the Christian world, both those who are actually in the midst of the fight, and those who have withdrawn from the battle to bury themselves in the deserts and in solitudes, let all these good priests come and join us: *vis unita fit fortior,* so that we may form under the standard of the cross, an army well arrayed for battle, and well regulated, in order to attack in concert the enemies of God who have already sounded the alarm: *Sonuerunt, frenduerunt fremuerunt, multiplicati sunt. Dirumpamus vincula eorum, et projiciamus a nobis jugum illorum. Qui habitat in cœlis irridebit eos. Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici ejus. Exurge Domine, quare obdormis? Exurge.* ("They have roared, they have gnashed with their teeth, they are multiplied. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their yoke from us. He who dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them. Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered. Arise, O Lord, why sleepest Thou. Arise!"*)

Arise, O Lord, why seemest Thou to sleep? Arise in Thine Omnipotence, Thy Mercy, and Thy Justice, and form for Thyself a chosen company of body-guards, to guard Thy house, to defend Thy glory, and to save those souls that cost Thee all Thy Blood, so that there may be but one Fold, and one Shepherd, and that all may give glory to Thee in Thy Holy Temple, *et in Templo ejus omnes dicent gloriam.* Amen.

* Ps. ii. 3, 4. lxvii. 1. xliii. 23.

MONTFORT'S DISCOURSE TO THE MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY GHOST.

*Nolite timere pusillus grex, quia complacuit Patri vestro dare vobis regnum.**

"Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you the kingdom;" fear not, although in the course of nature you have all to fear; you are, it is true, only a weak flock, a little flock, and so little that a child might count it, *puer scribet eos.* And then look at all the nations, the worldlings, the avaricious, the voluptuous, the libertines assembled in thousands to fight against you by their raillery, their calumnies, their contempt and their violence, *convenerunt in unum.*

You are little, they are great; you are poor, they are rich; you are without power or interest, they have every support; you are weak, they have authority: but once again, *nolite timere.*

Hear Jesus Christ: *Ego sum,* it is I, He says to you, it is I who have chosen you, *ego elegi vos;* it is I who am your Good Shepherd, *ego sum pastor bonus;* I know you as My sheep, *ego cognosco oves meas;* be not astonished if the world hates you, *nolite mirari si odit vos mundus;* know that it hated me before you; if you were of the world, the world would love you as something belonging to it; but because you are not of the world, you must needs have trial of its hatred, its calumnies, its wrongs, its contempt and its outrages.

Ego protector tuus sum...in manibus meis descripsi te. I am your protector and your defence, little company, says to you the Eternal Father: I have engraven you on My Heart, and written

* Luke xii. 32.

you in My Hands, in order to love and defend you, because you have placed your confidence in Me, and not in them, in My Providence, and not in money.

I will deliver you from the snares which will be laid for you, from the calumnies which will be heaped upon you, from the terrors of night and of darkness which terrify you, from the assaults of the noonday devil who wishes to seduce you; I will hide you under My wings, I will carry you upon My shoulders, I will nourish you on My breasts, I will arm you with My truth, and with such mighty power, that you shall see with your eyes your enemies fall in thousands at your sides; a thousand of the bad and rich at your right hand, and tens of thousands of the bad and poor on your left, and yet My vengeance shall not come nigh you.

You shall walk with courage upon the envious asp, and calumnious basilisk; you shall tread under your feet the lion, and the impious, angry, and proud dragon; I will hear you in your prayers, I will be with you in your sufferings, I will deliver you from all your evils, I will glorify you with all My glory, which I will show to you in My kingdom, openly and without veil, after I shall have laden you with joy and blessings upon earth.

There, dear little company, are the wondrous promises which God makes to you by the mouth of His prophet, if through Mary, you place all your confidence in Him.

Being, as you are, all abandoned to His Providence, it is for God to hold you up, and to multiply you, by blessing you in these words: *Crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram.*

Fear not, then, your little number, it is for God to defend you; fear not then your enemies, it is for God to guard you from their attacks and their

snares. It is for God to clothe you, to feed you, to support you; have no fear then, lest you should want for what is needful in these bad times, which are only bad, because we are wanting in confidence in God. It is also for God to glorify you; *glorificabo.* Fear not then, lest your glory should be taken from you; in a word, fear nothing, and sleep in safety on your Father's bosom. *In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam.*

But it is a small matter merely to fear nothing under His protection; God wishes in addition, that you should hope from Him great things, and that this hope should fill you with joy. This most rich and good Father wishes to give you the kingdom of His grace, *dare vobis regnum.*

You are kings and priests of God, *Fecisti nos Deo nostro regnum et sacerdotes* by your Christianity and your priesthood; but you are also kings by your voluntary poverty: *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.* Our Lord does not here merely say to you, that you shall have the kingdom of heaven, but, that being poor in spirit, you have it already; *ipsorum est,* and how is this?

1. Because, as in heaven there is no need of the things of earth, for its inhabitants are filled to overflowing with spiritual and eternal good things, and enjoy the full possession of God, so in like manner, those who are poor of their own accord, as we are, have no need of anything upon earth, because they wish for nothing and desire nothing: otherwise they would not be poor in spirit; for as the wise man observes, *Substantia inopis secundum cor ejus,* the goods of the poor are according to the dispositions of his heart; if his heart is content, he is rich and wants for nothing.

2. Because the poor in spirit are rich in faith and in other virtues. *Pauperes in hoc sæculo*

divites in fide; affatim dives est, qui cum Christo pauper est. He is abundantly rich, who is poor in spirit with Jesus Christ, says St. Jerome.

He is rich in divine consolations: *Parasti in dulcedine tua pauperi, Deus.* Not being pricked with the thorns of riches, nor consumed with a burning thirst of possessing them, and weaning himself, as king of heaven, from earthly and fleshly sweetness, he more than abounds with the consolations of God, *præbebit divitias regibus.*

He is even rich in the glory of heaven, although his body is not there as yet; for what is equivalent to gold, may in a certain sense, be said to be gold; *Aurum est quod aurum valet.* So in like manner, what is equivalent to heaven may be said to be heaven. But what is poverty of spirit? The kingdom of heaven, the glory of heaven; then is it not true that he who is poor in spirit possesses it? *Ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.*

3. Because the man who is truly poor in spirit enjoys the possession of God even in his heart. *Quid enim gloriosius homini quam sua vendere et Christum emere?* says St. Augustine: What more glorious for man than to sell his own goods and to buy Jesus! O happy sale, O fortunate exchange! *Nescit homo pretium ejus;* know, my dear brethren, that no man knows the value of your evangelical poverty; *Semper ergo dives est Christiana paupertas, quia plus est quod habet, quam quod non habet, nec timet in hoc mundo indigentia laborare, cui donatum est in omnium rerum Domino omnia possidere.* ("Christian poverty is ever rich, because more is that which it has, than that which it has not, nor can he fear poverty in this world, to whom it has been given to possess all things in the Lord of all.")

In order then that you may increase these riches of your poverty, and this great kingdom

which you have conquered, observe these three practices:

1. Esteem highly, and love tenderly that real and effective poverty, which you have embraced; no one becomes rich with greater ease, nor knows better how to make use of riches, says a learned bishop, than he who is truly poor in spirit; for he knows well that riches serve only to make poor and wretched those who love them whilst possessing them, and that they make truly rich and happy those who rid themselves of them by a holy and estimable contempt. *Divitiæ pauperem faciunt et miserum, si diligantur, beatum et divitem, si pro Christo contemnantur.* (Humbert.)

Beware then of looking behind you at what you have left, whether of patrimony or of worldly hopes. *Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum et respiciens post se est aptus regno Dei;* "No one putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Beware of looking around you with envy at the advantages or the honourable positions, which you might justly obtain, like so many others, but which inflame the concupiscence of the foolish. *Quæ concupiscentiam præbent insensato.* But having forsaken all things, like St. Peter, have no other joy and no other ambition save to attach yourselves more and more to Jesus Christ, and to follow Him. *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te.*

2. Try of your own free will the effects of poverty; first of all, the labours in the pulpit and confessional, not eating your bread except by the sweat of your brow; then the humiliation and contempt which poor ecclesiastics ordinarily meet with from the wickedness and unbelief of the world; lastly, those other inconveniences which accompany poverty, whether in clothes, or in food, or in lodging, or in the weariness of travelling, in

a word, in all the labours which the apostolic life calls forth.

Then it is, that, joining practice to the esteem of poverty, you will happily see the harvest which in sorrow you have sown upon earth, multiplied a hundredfold, and in eternity you will gather in its sheaves. *Euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua; venientes autem venient portantes manipulos suos.*

3. Sigh unceasingly after eternal goods, and knock without ceasing at the door of the mercy of Jesus Christ, Who acknowledges as His own and bears with exceeding love all those who are clothed in the livery of poverty.

He who is truly poor in spirit ought then to look at the world as a frightful desert, from which he has entirely withdrawn his heart; with regard to which he has stripped himself of all affection, and has broken all the ties which could detain him in it. Without parents, without friends, without business, like a soldier in campaign, his only desire should be to fight the battles of the faith of Jesus Christ. *Nemo militans Deo implicat se negotiis.*

Even, then, as some traveller who is in haste to arrive at the royal city towards which he is directing his rapid course, and who, full of this one thought, passes on with indifference, without stopping to look at the beauty of the countries through which he passes, so also the missionary, detached from all things, like St. Francis, marches on in great haste towards the heavenly Jerusalem, solely taken up with the charms of that immortal city of peace and glory; he has no eyes but to contemplate its beauty, he cannot give the name of trouble to what it costs him to arrive there, nor the name of pleasure to what takes him out of his course. Like another St. Paul, he "looks not

at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," because he says to himself, that the things which are seen are temporal and perishable, death takes them away, when one thinks to enjoy them; often even they are lost with rending of heart before death; whilst the things which are not seen, those unspeakable good things, which are tasted only in the possession of God, are eternal.

Thus at last, the missionary, held up and encouraged by this noble hope, which reposes in the depths of his heart, cannot be false to himself; and persevering in his holy and sublime calling, he will have the happiness of being able to repeat with confidence, when he comes to die, those beautiful and consoling words of the most zealous of the missionaries of Jesus Christ: *Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consummavi, fidem servavi, in reliquo reposita est mihi corona justitiæ, quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die justus judex.* ("I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the great Judge, will render to me in that day.")*

GOD ALONE.

* II Tim. iv. 7, 8.

THE SECRET OF MARY UNVEILED TO THE DEVOUT SOUL.

"I cannot think of a higher work, or a broader vocation for any one than the simple spreading of this peculiar devotion of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort. Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformations it causes in his soul, will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy as a means for the salvation of men, and for the coming of the kingdom of Christ. Oh! if Mary were but known, there would be no coldness to Jesus then! Oh! if Mary were but known, how much more wonderful would be our faith, and how different would our communions be! Oh, if Mary were but known, how much happier, how much holier, how much less worldly should we be, and how much more should we be living images of our sole Lord and Saviour, her dearest and most blessed Son."—Dr. Faber, *Preface to Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*

THE SECRET OF MARY UNVEILED TO THE DEVOUT SOUL.*

Predestinate soul, I have a secret for you, which the Most High has taught me, and which I have not been able to find in any book old or new,† I confide it to you, by the Holy Ghost, on condition: 1. That you communicate it only to those persons who deserve it by their prayers, their alms, mortifications, persecutions, and detachment from the

* This little work, of which mention has been made in the Life, and of which only a few pages were given at the end of the French Editions, was published entire in a separate form only a year ago by M. Oudin of Poitiers. More than twenty thousand copies have been printed with the Imprimatur of Mgr. Pie, the Bishop of Poitiers. Through the kindness of M. Oudin, and of the Daughters of Wisdom, of the Mother-house of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, the Translator is now enabled to place it before his English readers in its perfect form. He has however been requested to state, that to him alone has been granted the right of Translation in England.

The work, when discovered, bore upon it the following inscription: "Copy of a Manuscript written by the late M. de Montfort with his own hand, on the Slavery of the Blessed Virgin, and sent by him to a pious person of his acquaintance." Those who have read his Treatise on the True Devotion to Our Lady, translated by Father Faber, will recognise at once the style of the Servant of God, and in many places, the very same expressions.

The "Secret of Mary" seems to have been written first, and afterwards to have been worked up into the Treatise on the True Devotion. It is praised by the Author of his Life for its rare exactness of doctrine. In clearness of arrangement, it seems superior to his other Treatise, and as on that account it is well adapted for general circulation, it is the intention of the Translator to publish it in a separate form, together with a method of hearing Mass in union with Mary, the method of saying the Rosary as taught by de Montfort, and a few other Devotions, which have been added to the Poitiers edition.

The "Tree of Life" and the two Prayers to Jesus and Mary were also written by the Servant of God, and have never before been published.—(Tr.)

† From this it would appear that the devotion of the Holy Bondage was revealed to the Ven. Missionary directly by God through Mary. Afterwards in trying to justify this devotion in his longer treatise on the same subject, he seems to have become aware that the idea was not new; still even in that treatise it is evident that he feels that in the way he teaches this devotion, there is something all his own, and that he could say in all truth, "*Secretum meum mihi.*"

world. 2. That you make use of it to become holy and heavenly; for this secret only becomes great in proportion to the use made of it by the soul; beware, then, of remaining with your arms folded doing nothing: my secret would then become fatal to you, and would turn to your condemnation. 3. On condition that you thank God, all the days of your life, for the grace He has given you in teaching you a secret which you do not deserve to know.

According to the measure of your use of this secret in the ordinary actions of your life, will you understand its value and excellence, which at first you will but imperfectly understand, on account of the multitude and grievousness of your sins, and your secret attachment to yourself.

Before going any further, and in order to restrain for a moment any natural and too eager desire to know this truth, say devoutly the *Ave Maris Stella* and the *Veni Creator*, in order to ask of God the grace to understand and relish this divine mystery.

On account of the little time I have for writing, and you for reading, I will say everything as briefly as possible.

Soul, living image of God, and redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, the will of God concerning you, is that you should become holy like Him in this life, and glorious like Him in the next. The acquisition of the holiness of God is your sure vocation; and it is to this that all your thoughts, words, and actions, all your sufferings, and all the movements of your life must tend; or you will resist God, by not doing that for which He has created you, and is now preserving you. Oh, what an admirable work! dust changed into light, dirt into purity, sin into holiness, the creature into its Creator, and man into God!

Admirable work, I repeat, but very difficult in itself, and impossible to mere nature; it is only God, who, by His grace, and His abundant and extraordinary grace, can bring it to pass; the creation of the whole universe is not so great a masterpiece as this.

Soul, how wilt thou act? What means wilt thou choose in order to mount up where God is calling thee? The means of salvation and holiness are known to all; they are marked in the Gospel, explained by the masters of the spiritual life, practised by the saints, and are necessary to all those who wish to be saved, and to arrive at perfection; such are: humility of heart, continual prayer, complete mortification, abandonment to the Providence of God, and conformity to the Will of God.

To practise these means of salvation and holiness, the grace of God is absolutely necessary, and this grace is given to all in greater or less measure; for God, although infinitely good, does not give equally strong grace to all, although He gives sufficient to each. A soul faithful to God, with a great grace, will perform a great action, and with a weak grace, a small action; it is the value and excellence of the grace given by God, and corresponded to by the soul, which constitutes the value and excellence of our actions. These principles are incontestable. Everything, then, consists in finding an easy means of obtaining from God the necessary grace in order to become holy; and it is this which I wish to teach you. Now, I say, that to find this grace of God we must find Mary, because:

1. It is Mary alone, who has found grace before God, both for herself and for every man in particular. The patriarchs, and prophets, and all the saints of the old Law could not find this grace.

2. It is Mary who has given being and life to the Author of all grace; and on this account she is called the Mother of grace, *Mater gratiæ.*

3. God the Father, from whom every good gift and perfect grace comes down as from its essential source, in giving her His Son, has given her all His graces, so that, as St. Bernard says, the will of God has been given her in Him and with Him.

4. God has chosen her for the treasurer, steward, and dispenser of all His graces, so that all His graces and all His gifts pass through her hands; and, according to the power she has received over them, as St. Bernardine teaches, she gives to whom she wills, as she likes, and as much as she likes, the graces of the Eternal Father, the virtues of Jesus Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

5. As in the natural order, a child must have a father and mother, so in the order of grace, a true child of the Church must have God for his Father and Mary for his Mother; and if he glories in having God for his Father, without at the same time having a tender filial love for Mary, he is a deceiver, whose only father is the devil.

6. Since Mary has formed the head of the predestinate, who is Jesus Christ, it is also her office to form the members of this Head, that is to say, all true Christians; for a mother does not form the head without the members, nor the members without the head. Whoever then wishes to be a member of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, must be formed in Mary by means of the grace of Jesus Christ, who dwells in her in His fulness, in order to be communicated in fulness to the true members of Jesus Christ, and to her true children.

7. The Holy Ghost having espoused Mary, and

having produced in her, and by her, and from her Jesus Christ, that Masterpiece, the Word Incarnate, as He has never repudiated her, so He continues every day to produce in her, and by her, in a mysterious but true manner, His predestinate.

8. Mary has received from God a special dominion over souls, in order to nourish them and to make them grow up in God. St. Augustine even says, that all the predestinate are in the womb of Mary, and that they are not born, until the good Mother brings them forth into life eternal. Consequently, as the child draws all its nourishment from its mother, who gives it to it in proportion to its weakness, so in like manner do the predestinate draw all their spiritual nourishment and all their strength from Mary.

9. It is to Mary, that God the Father has said: *In Jacob inhabita:* My daughter, "let thy dwelling be in Jacob," that is to say in my elect typified by Jacob. It is to Mary that God the Son has said, *In Israel hæreditare:* "My dear Mother, let thine inheritance be in Israel," that is to say, in the predestinate. Lastly, it is to Mary that the Holy Spirit has said: *in electis meis mitte radices,* "Strike thy roots, my faithful spouse, in my elect." Whoever then is elect and predestinate has the Holy Virgin dwelling in him, that is to say, in his soul; he allows her to strike her roots in profound humility, in ardent charity, and in all virtue.

10. Mary is called by St. Augustine, and indeed is the living mould of God, *forma Dei,* that is to say, it is in her alone, that the God-Man was naturally formed without losing any feature, so to speak, of His Godhead; and it is also in her alone that man can be properly, and in a life-like way,

formed into God, so far as human nature is capable of this by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Now, a sculptor may make a statue or likeness after nature in two ways: 1. out of some hard and shapeless material, by making use of his skill, his strength, his knowledge, and good instruments; 2. he may cast it in a mould. The first manner is long and difficult, and subject to many accidents: it often happens that a mere blow of the hammer or chisel, awkwardly given, is enough to spoil the whole work. The second manner is quick, easy, and gentle, without trouble or expense, provided the mould be perfect, and a good natural likeness, and the material used offer no resistance to the hand.

Mary is the great mould of God, made by the Holy Ghost, in order to form a God-Man by the Hypostatic Union, and a Man-God by grace. In this mould, no feature of the Godhead is wanting; whoever is cast in it, and allows himself to be freely handled, receives therein all the features of Jesus Christ, who is True God. And this is done in a gentle manner, and in proportion to his human weakness, without much agony or labour; in a sure manner, without fear of illusion, for the devil has never had, and never will have, access to Mary; and lastly, in a holy and spotless manner, without the shadow of the least stain of sin. Oh! what a difference there is between a soul formed in Jesus Christ by the ordinary ways, that is to say, by trusting, like the sculptor, to mere natural skill and ingenuity, and a soul thoroughly tractable, really detached, and well molten, which, without in any way leaning upon itself, suffers itself to be cast in Mary, and to be handled by the Holy Ghost! How many stains, how many defects, how much darkness, how many illusions, how much of what is merely natural, and human, is there in

the first soul; and how pure, how divine, and like to Jesus Christ, is the second!

There is not, nor will there ever be, a creature in which God is greater, outside Himself, than in the divine Mary, not excepting either the saints, or the cherubim, or the highest seraphim, in Paradise itself. Mary is the Paradise of God, and His unspeakable world, into which the Son of God has gone to work His marvels, to keep it, and to take His pleasure therein. He has made a world for man in his state of pilgrimage, which is that on which we dwell. He has made a world for man in a state of blessedness, which is heaven; but He has made another world for Himself, to which He has given the name of Mary; a world almost unknown to all mortals here below, and incomprehensible to all the angels and all the blessed, who, on high, in heaven, are so filled with admiration at seeing God so exalted, so withdrawn from all of them, so separated and hidden in His world, the divine Mary, that they cry out without ceasing, Holy, Holy, Holy.

Happy, and a thousand times happy, is the soul here below to which the Holy Ghost reveals, and makes known, the Secret of Mary; to which He opens this "garden enclosed," by permitting it to enter it; to which He gives access to this "fountain sealed up," by suffering it to draw from it, and to drink deep draughts of the living waters of grace! Such a soul will find God Alone without any creature, in this most sweet creature; but God at the same time infinitely holy and exalted, infinitely condescending and proportioned to its weakness. Since God is everywhere, He may be found everywhere, even in hell; but there is no place in which the creature can find Him nearer to itself, and more proportioned to its weakness, than in Mary, for it was for this end that He came

down into her bosom. Everywhere else He is the Bread of the Strong, the Bread of Angels, but in Mary He is the Bread of children.

Let no one imagine then, as some do who are deceived by false lights, that Mary, being a creature, is a hindrance to union with the Creator; it is no longer Mary, who lives, it is Jesus Christ; it is God Alone who lives in her. Her transformation into God surpasses that of St. Paul, and the other saints, as heaven is higher than the earth, Mary was made only for God; and far from her detaining a soul in herself which casts itself upon her bosom, she on the contrary, casts it immediately upon God, and unites it to Him with so much the more perfection, as the soul is more united to her. Mary is the marvellous echo of God, who answers only "God," when we say "Mary;" who glorifies only God, when with St. Elizabeth, we call her Blessed. If the falsely illuminated, who have been miserably led away by the devil even in prayer, had known how to find Mary, and by Mary, Jesus, they would never have had such terrible falls. When we have once found Mary, and by Mary, Jesus, and by Jesus, God the Father, we have found all good, is the language of holy souls: *Inventa, etc.* When they say all, they except nothing: all grace, and all friendship with God; all safety against the enemies of God; all truth as opposed to falsehood; all facility and complete victory over the difficulties of salvation; all sweetness and all joy amidst the bitterness of life.

Not that he who has found Mary, by true devotion, will be exempt from crosses, and sufferings: far from it, he is more assailed by them than any other, because Mary, being the mother of all living, gives to her children pieces of the Tree of Life, which is the Cross of Jesus; but in cutting

for them good crosses, she obtains for them the grace to carry them with patience, and even with joy, so that the crosses which she gives to those who belong to her are rather sweet than bitter crosses. Or, if for awhile they feel the bitterness of the chalice which they must drink in order to be the friends of God, the consolation and joy which this good mother gives after this sorrow, encourages them exceedingly to carry still heavier and more bitter crosses.

The difficulty then is to know how truly to find the divine Mary, in order to find all abundant grace. God, being absolute Master, can communicate by Himself that which ordinarily He communicates only by Mary; we cannot even deny, without rashness, that sometimes He does so; nevertheless, according to the order established by Divine Wisdom, He communicates Himself ordinarily to men only through Mary in the order of grace, as St. Thomas teaches; we must therefore, in order to mount up, and unite ourselves to Him, make use of the same means, of which He made use to come down to us, to become man, and communicate to us His graces. The means then to find grace, and abundant grace, is a true devotion to Mary.

But it must be remarked, that there are several kinds of true devotion to the Most Holy Virgin, for here I do not speak of false devotions.

The first consists in performing the duties of a Christian, by avoiding mortal sin, by acting more from love than from fear, and by praying from time to time to the Holy Virgin, honouring her as the Mother of God, without having any special devotion towards her.

The second consists in entertaining for the Blessed Virgin, feelings of most perfect esteem, love, confidence and veneration. It leads us to

join her confraternities, to recite her chaplet and the Holy Rosary, to honour the images and altars of Mary, to publish her praises, and to enrol ourselves in her congregations. If in doing this, we abstain from sin, this devotion is good, holy, and praiseworthy; but it is not so perfect as the following, nor so capable of withdrawing souls from creatures, and of detaching them from themselves, in order to unite them with Jesus Christ.

The third devotion of the Holy Virgin, known and practised by very few, is that which I am about to unveil to you, predestinate souls. It consists in giving ourselves up entirely to the Most Holy Virgin, in the quality of slaves, in order to belong wholly to Jesus Christ; and in the next place to do all our actions with Mary, in Mary, by Mary, for Mary, in order to do them more perfectly with Jesus, in Jesus, by Jesus, and for Jesus, our Last End.

I will explain these words.

In order to practise this excellent devotion, I observe in the first place, that we should choose some remarkable feast, on which to give, consecrate, and sacrifice ourselves to Jesus by Mary out of our own free will and out of love, without constraint; wholly, without any reservation; our body and our soul; our body with all its members and all its senses; our soul with all its powers; our exterior goods of fortune, such as house, family or revenues; our interior goods of soul; that is to say, our merits, our graces, our virtues, our good works, past, present, or to come; in a word, all that we have in the order of nature, and in the order of grace, and all that we may have in time to come, in the order of nature, of grace or of glory; and that without any reservation, even of a farthing, a hair, or of the least good action, and that for all eternity, and that without looking for

any other recompense for our offering but the honour of belonging to Jesus Christ by her and in her, even if this divine Queen were not, as she always is, the most generous, and the most grateful of creatures.

It must be here observed, that by this devotion, the soul sacrifices to Jesus, by the hand of Mary, all that it holds most dear, and of which not even any religious order would require the sacrifice; namely, the right which we have of disposing of the value of our prayers, our alms, and our mortifications, so as to leave the entire disposal of them to the Holy Virgin, to be applied, according to her will, to the greatest glory of God, which she alone perfectly knows.

We leave to her disposal all the value, satisfactory, and impetratory, of our good works; thus, after we have made the oblation, although without any vow, we are no longer masters of any of the good we do; the most Holy Virgin may apply it, at one time for the relief and deliverance of a soul in Purgatory, at another for the conversion of some poor sinner.

We also place, by this devotion, our merits in the hands of the Most Holy Virgin; but for her to keep them, augment them, and embellish them, because we cannot communicate one to another the merits of sanctifying grace, still less those of glory; but we give her all our prayers, and good works, so far as they are impetratory and satisfactory, to distribute and apply them to whom she pleases; and if, after having thus consecrated ourselves to the Holy Virgin, we desire to relieve some soul in Purgatory, to save some sinner, to help some one of our friends by our prayers, our alms, our mortifications, or our sacrifices, we must ask it of her humbly, and leave everything to her good pleasure and determination, without knowing

anything about it, being fully persuaded that the value of our actions, being dispensed by the same hand, of which God makes use to distribute to us His graces and gifts, it cannot fail to be applied to His greatest glory.

I have said, that this devotion consists in giving ourselves to Mary in the *quality of slaves*. Now there are three kinds of slavery: the first is the slavery of nature; all men, good and bad, are the slaves of God in this sense. The second is the slavery of constraint; the devils and the damned are slaves of God in this second sense. The third is the slavery of love and of the will; and it is in this sense that we ought to consecrate ourselves to God, by Mary, as being the most perfect way in which a creature can possibly give itself to its Creator.

Remark again, that there is a great difference between a servant and a slave; a servant expects wages for his service, a slave none. A servant is free to leave his master when he likes, he serves him only for a time; a slave cannot justly leave his master, he belongs to him his whole life long. A master has not the right of life and death over his servant, but he has over his slave, so that he can put him to death without being interfered with by justice. Christians do not make such slaves; only Turks and idolaters act in this way. Happy and a thousand times happy is that generous soul which consecrates itself entirely to Jesus by Mary as a slave of love, after having shaken off by baptism the tyrannical slavery of the devil!

I should require much light from God, in order to describe perfectly the excellence of this practice: I will only say in passing,

1. That to give ourselves in this way to Jesus by the hands of Mary, is to imitate God the Father, Who has given us His Son only by Mary,

and Who communicates His grace to us only by Mary; it is to imitate God the Son, Who has come to us only by Mary, and Who, having given us an example to act as He acted, has asked us to go to Him by the same means by which He has come to us, that is to say, by Mary; it is to imitate the Holy Ghost who communicates His graces and gifts to us, only by Mary. Is it not just, says St. Bernard, that grace should return to its Author, by the same channel which has transmitted it to us? *(ut eodem alveo ad largitorem gratiæ gratia redeat, quo fluxit.)*

2. To go in this way to Jesus by Mary, is truly to honour Jesus Christ, because it is to show that we are not worthy to approach His infinite Holiness directly and by ourselves, on account of our sins, and that we have need of Mary, His Holy Mother, to be our advocate and mediatrix with Him who is our Mediator. It is at the same time to approach Him as our Mediator and our Brother, and to humble ourselves before Him, as before our God and our Judge: in a word, it is to practise humility, which always is exceedingly pleasing to the Heart of God.

3. To consecrate ourselves in this way to Jesus by Mary, is to place in the hands of Mary, our good actions, which, however good they may appear, are very often soiled, and unworthy of the sight and acceptance of God, before Whom the stars are not pure. Ah! let us pray to our dear mother and mistress, that having received our poor present, she may purify it, sanctify it, and embellish it, so as to render it worthy of God. All the revenues of our soul are of less value before God, the Father of the family, to gain His friendship and grace, than a worm-eaten apple in the hands of some poor peasant who rents a farm of the king would be in the sight of His Majesty, to

pay for his farm. What would this poor man do, if he had any good sense, and if he had any interest with the queen? Would he not give her his apple, and would not the queen, out of kindness to the poor peasant and out of respect for the king, remove from the apple all that was worm-eaten or spoilt, and place it in a vessel of gold surrounded by flowers; and the king, could he refuse to accept it, even with joy, from the hands of the queen who favours this peasant? *Modicum quid offerre desideras, manibus Mariæ tradere cura, si non vis sustinere repulsam.* "If you wish to offer anything to God," says St. Bernard, "place it in the hands of Mary, unless you wish to be refused." Great God, even when we do all, how little it is! But let us place it in Mary's hands by this devotion. As we shall have given ourselves altogether to her, so far as we are able, by despoiling ourselves of everything in her honour, she will be infinitely more generous towards us, and will give us for an egg, an ox. She will communicate herself wholly to us, with her merits and virtues; she will place our presents on the golden plate of her charity; she will clothe us, as Rebecca clothed Jacob, with the beautiful garments of her elder and only Son, Jesus Christ, that is to say, with His merits, of which she has the disposal; and thus, as her servants and her slaves, after having despoiled ourselves of everything in her honour, we shall be clad in double garments: *Omnes domestici ejus vestiti sunt duplicibus:* the garments, ornaments, perfumes, merits and virtues of Jesus and of Mary.

4. To give ourselves thus to the Most Holy Virgin, is to practise charity to our neighbour in the highest possible degree, for it is to give to Mary all that we hold most dear, in order that she

may dispose of it at her good pleasure in favour of the living and the dead.

5. By this devotion a soul can place its graces and merits in safety, by making Mary the depository of all its goods. The soul can say to her with confidence: "See, my dear mother, my kind mistress, here is the good, which by the grace of thy dear Son, I have been enabled to do; I am not able to keep it on account of my weakness and inconstancy, and on account of the great number and the malice of my enemies, who ceaselessly attack me. Alas! I see every day the cedars of Lebanon fall down into the mud, and the eagles which had raised themselves to the Sun become birds of night; I see even a thousand of the just fall on my left hand, and ten thousand on my right. Ah! my powerful and most powerful princess, do thou hold me for fear I fall; do thou keep all my good, for fear I may be robbed of it; all I have I confide to thee, as a trust. *Depositum custodi.—Scio cui credidi.* I know whom I have trusted, I know well who thou art, this is why I entrust myself entirely to thee; thou art faithful and true to God and to men, and thou wilt not suffer anything to perish of that which I entrust to thee; thou art powerful, and nothing can hurt thee, nor take from thee what thou holdest in thy hands." *Ipsam sequens non devias, ipsam rogans non desperas, ipsam cogitans non erras; ipsa tenente non corruis: ipsa protegente non metuis, ipsa duce, non fatigaris; ipsa propitia pervenis.* (S. Bernard. Inter flores. cap. 135, de Maria Virgine, p. 2150.)—("When you follow Mary, you will not go out of the way; when you pray to her, you will not despair; when you think of her, you will make no mistake; when she holds you up, you will not fall; when she protects you, you need not fear; under her guidance you will not be

tired; under her favour, you will arrive at your journey's end, and at the harbour of safety.") And again: "*Detinet Filium ne percutiat; detinet diabolum, ne noceat; detinet virtutes ne fugiant, detinet merita ne pereant; detinet gratias ne effluant.*" (She keeps her Son from striking us; she keeps the devil from hurting us; she keeps our virtues from escaping; she keeps our merits from being destroyed; she keeps our graces from being lost.) These are the words of St. Bernard, and they express in substance all that I have been saying. Were there but this one motive to excite me to this devotion, namely, that it is a sure means of keeping me in the grace of God, and even of augmenting it in me, I ought to breathe nothing but fire and flames for its sake.

6. This devotion renders a soul truly free with the liberty of the children of God. Since for the love of Mary, we reduce ourselves of our own free will to slavery, this dear mistress, out of gratitude, enlarges and dilates our heart, and causes it to walk with giant steps in the way of God's commandments. Ordinarily she takes away from the soul, weariness, sadness, and scruples. It was this devotion which our Lord taught to Mother Agnes of Jesus,* as a sure means of deliverance from the severe sufferings and perplexities by which she was tried. "Make thyself," He said, "my mother's slave:" she did so, and in a moment her troubles ceased.

Were we to give all the authorities for this devotion, we should have to make mention here of all the Bulls and Indulgences of Popes, and the pastoral letters of bishops in its favour, the confraternities established in its honour, the examples

* A nun of the Order of St. Dominic, who died in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1634, at the convent of Langeac in Auvergne.

of many saints, and illustrious persons who have practised it; but all this I pass over in silence.

I said, in the second place, that this devotion consists in doing all our actions with Mary, in Mary, by Mary, and for Mary. It is not enough to have given ourselves once to Jesus, in the quality of slaves: it is not enough to do this every month, or every week; this would be too transient a devotion, nor would it raise the soul to that perfection to which it is able to raise it. There is not much difficulty in enrolling ourselves in a confraternity, or even embracing outwardly the devotion of which I am speaking, in saying a few vocal prayers every day, as it prescribes; but the great difficulty is to enter into the spirit of this devotion, which is to make a soul interiorly dependent upon, and a slave of the most Holy Virgin, and of Jesus by her. I have met with many persons, who, with admirable zeal, have entered into this holy slavery, outwardly; but I have found but few who have acquired its spirit, and still fewer who have persevered in it.*

1. The essential part of this devotion consists in doing all our actions *with Mary*, that is to say, to take the Holy Virgin for the perfect model of

* All this goes to show that the Servant of God was aware all along that in *substance* the devotion of the Holy Slavery was not new. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, when we know that he first read of the Devotion in M. Boudon's work upon that subject at Saint Sulpice? In a note at the beginning of this little treatise I stated, that it was while writing his work on the "True Devotion," that he seems to have become aware that the Devotion of the Holy Bondage was not new. No doubt he speaks there more clearly than elsewhere of the antiquity of the Devotion, but I ought also to have reminded my readers in that note of his early acquaintance with it through the work of M. Boudon. Still, however, I must repeat, that both with regard to the manner of teaching the Devotion, and as to the fruits which he promises to those who practise it, (especially the Presence of Mary in the Soul,) he seems to have had a special revelation from Almighty God through His Holy Mother, so that he may well say in all truth, that he had never found his Secret in any book, ancient or modern.—(Tr.)

all we have to do. This is why, before undertaking anything, we must renounce ourselves, and our own views, however good they may be; we must annihilate ourselves before God, as being of ourselves incapable of any supernatural good, or even of any action profitable to salvation; we must have recourse to the most Holy Virgin, and unite ourselves with her and with her intentions; we must unite ourselves by Mary, with the intentions of Jesus Christ; that is to say, we must place ourselves as instruments in the hands of the Holy Virgin, in order that she may act in us, and for us, and that she may do with us what she likes, to the greater glory of her Son, and by her Son Jesus Christ, to the glory of the Father; so that we must not undertake any kind of interior life, or perform any spiritual action except in dependence upon her.

2. We must do all our actions *in Mary*, that is to say, we must accustom ourselves little by little to interior recollection, in order to form some little idea or spiritual image of the Holy Virgin: she will be to the soul an oratory in which she can offer up all her prayers to God, without fear of being repulsed; the Tower of David, to secure her from all her enemies; a lighted lamp to enlighten all her interior, and to inflame her with the love of God; a sacred monstrance in which God can be seen in Mary, and with Mary. In a word, Mary will be to the soul her only all before God, and her universal refuge. If the soul pray, she will pray in Mary; if she receives Jesus in Holy Communion, she will place Him in Mary, so that He may take complacency in her. Mary will receive Him lovingly, will honourably enthrone Him, will adore Him profoundly, will love Him perfectly, will embrace Him closely, and will render Him in spirit and in truth many services which are un-

known to us in our thick darkness.* If she acts, (this soul) it will be in Mary; if she reposes, it will be in Mary; and everywhere and in all things she will make acts of self-renunciation.

3. Again, we must never go to our Lord, except *by Mary*, through her intercession and power with Him; we must never be alone when we pray to Him.

4. Lastly, we must do all our actions *for Mary*, that is to say, that being the slaves of this august Princess, it is just that we should do everything for her, that we should no longer work except for her, for her interests and glory; not that we take her for the last end of our services; for that can only be Jesus Christ, but for our proximate end, and as an easy means through which to go to Jesus. The soul, then, in everything she does, must renounce her own self-love, which sets itself up almost always as an end, in a way which cannot be perceived, and often repeat from the bottom of the heart, "O, my dear Mistress, it is for thee that I go here or there, that I do this or that; that I suffer this pain or that wrong! Beware, predestinate soul, of believing that it is more perfect to go straight to Jesus, straight to God in thy actions and intentions; if thou shalt go to Him without Mary, thy actions will be of little value; but when thou goest to Him by Mary, it is Mary who works in thee, and consequently thy actions will be highly exalted and very worthy of God.

More than this, beware of doing violence to thyself, in order to taste and feel what thou art doing; say and do everything in that pure faith, which Mary had on earth, and which she will communicate to thee in good time; leave to thy sovereign, poor little slave, the clear sight of God, the trans-

* See treatise on the True devotion to the Blessed Virgin, p. 188.

ports, the joys, the pleasures, the riches of heaven, and take for thyself only pure faith, full of disgusts, distractions, weariness, and dryness; say, "*Amen*, whatever Mary, my mistress, does in heaven, so let it be!"

O! take great care, once more, not to torment thyself, shouldst thou not immediately enjoy the sweet presence of the Blessed Virgin in thy interior; this grace is not given to all; and when God favours a soul with this grace out of His great mercy, it is very easy for the soul to lose it, unless she be faithful in frequent self-denial; and should this misfortune happen to thee, then return quietly, and make honourable amends to thy Sovereign.

Experience will teach thee infinitely more than I can tell thee, and thou wilt find, if thou art faithful to the little which I have taught thee, so many rich graces in this practice, that thou wilt be surprised, and filled full of joy. Let us labour, then, dear soul, and let us act in such a way, that by the faithful practice of this devotion, the soul of Mary may be in us to glorify our Lord, and that the spirit of Mary may be in us to rejoice in God our Saviour. These are the words of St. Ambrose: "*Sit in singulis anima Mariæ ut magnificet Dominum, sit in singulis spiritus Mariæ ut exultet in Deo.*" And let us not think that there was more glory and happiness in dwelling in Abraham's bosom, which was called Paradise, than in the bosom of Mary, in which God has placed His throne. These are the words of learned Abbot Guerric: "*Ne credideris majoris esse felicitatis habitare in sinu Abrahæ, qui Paradisus, quam in sinu Mariæ in quo Dominus posuit thronum suum.*"

This devotion, faithfully practised, produces an infinite number of happy effects. When the life

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of Mary is well established in the soul, it is no longer in some sort the soul which lives, it is Mary who lives in it; the soul of Mary takes its place, so to speak. But when, by an unspeakable but real grace, the Divine Mary becomes Queen in a soul, what marvels does she not work! As she is the worker of great marvels, particularly in the interior, she works them in secret, without even the knowledge of the soul, for were the soul to know, it would destroy the beauty of Mary's works.

As she is, wherever she is found, the fruitful Virgin, she brings with her into every interior where she is, purity of heart and body, purity in intention and design, and fruitfulness in good works. Do not think, dear soul, that Mary, the most fruitful of all pure creatures, and who went so far as to produce a God-Man, remains idle in a faithful soul. She will make it live without ceasing, to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in it. "*Filioli mei, quos iterum parturio donec formetur Christus in vobis.*" (Gal. iv. 19.) ("My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you.") If Jesus Christ is as much the fruit of Mary in each soul in particular, as for the whole world in general, it is especially in the soul in which the Divine Virgin dwells, that Jesus Christ is her fruit and her masterpiece. Lastly, Mary becomes everything to this soul before Jesus Christ; she enlightens the mind by her pure faith; she deepens the heart by her humility, she enlarges and inflames it by her love, she purifies it by her purity, she ennobles and enlarges it by her maternity. But where am I to stop? It is only experience that can teach the marvels of Mary, marvels past all belief to the wise and proud, and even to the generality of devout men and women.

As it is by Mary that God came into the world the first time, in humiliation and annihilation, may we not also say, that it is by Mary that God will come a second time, as the whole Church expects, to reign over all and to judge the living and the dead? How this will be done, and when it will be done, who can tell? But I know well, that God, whose thoughts are as far removed from our thoughts as heaven is above the earth, will come in a time and in a way, the least expected by men; even by those who are most learned and most versed in Holy Scripture, which is very obscure on this subject. We ought also to believe, that towads the end of time, and perhaps sooner than we think, God will raise up great men full of the Holy Ghost, and wholly devoted to the worship of Mary, by whom this divine Sovereign will work great marvels in the world, in order to destroy sin, and establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ, her Son, upon the ruins of the kingdom of this corrupted world; and it is by means of this devotion to the most Holy Virgin, of which I do but give the outlines, and which I only lessen by my feebleness, that these holy men will bring everything about.

Besides the interior practice of this devotion, of which we have just been speaking, there are also certain external practices, which we must not either omit or neglect.

The first is, to give ourselves to Jesus Christ, on some remarkable feast, by the hands of Mary, whose slaves we make ourselves; to communicate with this intention, on that day, and to pass the day in prayer; to renew this consecration at least every year, on the same day.

The second is, to pay to the Blessed Virgin every year, on the same day, some little tribute, as a token of our servitude and dependence: such has

always been the homage paid by slaves to their masters. Now, this tribute may be either some mortification, or some alms, or some pilgrimage, or some prayers; the Blessed Marino, as we are told by his brother, St. Peter Damian, took the discipline publicly every year on the same day, before an altar of the Blessed Virgin. We neither ask for nor counsel such fervour; but, if we do not give much to Mary, we ought, at least, to offer what we give her with humble and very grateful hearts.

The third is, to celebrate every year with more than ordinary devotion, the feast of the Annunciation, which is the chief feast of this devotion, and has been established in order that we may honour and imitate the dependence in which the Eternal Word placed Himself on that day for the love of us.

The fourth external practice is to say every day, without however thinking ourselves obliged to do so under pain of sin, *the little Crown of the Blessed Virgin*, composed of *three Paters* and *twelve Aves;* to often recite the *Magnificat*, which is the only hymn of Mary's which we have, in order to thank God for His benefits, and to obtain fresh benefits from Him; above all, we must not fail to say it in thanksgiving after Holy Communion, as the learned Gerson tells us, that the Holy Virgin recited it very often herself, and particularly after Holy Communion.

The learned Benzonius, in his explanation of the *Magnificat*, relates several miracles worked through its power: he says that the devils tremble and fly away when they hear the words: "*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.*"

The fifth practice is, to say with devotion the *Ave Maria*. The faithful slaves of Jesus in Mary,

ought to love to recite often this prayer, the value and merit of which are not sufficiently known, nor its excellence and necessity. The *Ave Maria* is a heavenly dew which waters our soul, and renders it fruitful in all kinds of virtues; a soul which is not watered with this prayer, brings forth no fruit, nothing but briars and thorns.....Predestinate souls, slaves of Jesus in Mary, know that the *Ave Maria* is the most beautiful of all prayers, after the Pater; it is the most perfect compliment you can pay to Mary, because it is the compliment which the Most High Himself paid her by the archangel, whom He sent to gain her heart. The *Ave Maria*, well said, puts the devil to flight, it is the hammer which crushes him. The *Ave Maria* is the sanctification of the soul, the joy of angels, the melody of the predestinate, the song of the New Testament, the delight of Mary, the glory of the Most Holy Trinity; the *Ave Maria* is a loving kiss which we give to Mary; it is a vermillion rose which we present to her, it is a precious pearl which we offer her; it is a chalice of ambrosial and divine nectar which we hold to her lips. All these are the comparisons of the saints.

I pray you then, most earnestly, for the love I bear you in Jesus and Mary, not to be content with saying the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, but also to say a chaplet, and even, if you have time, the whole Rosary, every day, and you will bless, at the hour of your death, the day and hour when you believed what I am now telling you; and after having "sown in blessings," the blessings of Jesus and Mary, you will reap eternal blessings in heaven: "*Qui seminat in benedictionibus, de benedictionibus et metet.*" (2 Cor. ix. 6.)

THE TREE OF LIFE, ITS CULTURE AND GROWTH;

Or, How to make Mary live and reign in our Souls.

Predestinate soul, have you understood, by the light of the Holy Ghost, what I have just said? If you have understood, thank God for it; it is a secret unknown by almost all the world. If you have found the treasure hidden in the field of Mary, the precious pearl of the Gospel, you must sell all that you have and buy it, you must make a sacrifice of yourself in the hands of Mary, that you may lose yourself happily in her, in order to find in her, God Alone.

If the Holy Ghost has planted in your soul the true Tree of Life, namely, the devotion which I have just explained, you must give your whole care to cultivate it, in order that it may yield its fruit in due season. This devotion is the mustard-seed, spoken of in the Gospel, which is the "least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in its branches;" that is to say, the predestinate, who make their nests in its branches, repose in its shade from the heat of the sun, and hide there in safety from the beasts of prey.

Here is the way, predestinate soul, to cultivate it:—

1. This tree, when planted in a truly faithful heart, requires to be in the open air, without any human support; this tree, being divine, requires to be always free from any creature which might prevent it raising itself up to its principle, which is God. Thus the soul must not lean upon its

own skill, or upon its natural talents, upon its good name, or upon the protection of men; it must have recourse to Mary, and count only on her aid.

2. The soul, in which this tree is planted, must be ceaselessly occupied, like a good gardener, in keeping it, and looking after it. For this tree, having life, and having to produce the fruit of life, requires continual cultivation and looking after, in order to grow; and it should be the soul's aim, if it would become perfect, to think of it often, and even to make it its chief occupation.

3. The thorns and thistles, which with time, might choke this Tree of Life, and prevent it yielding fruit, must be cut off, and rooted up: that is to say, the soul must be faithful in cutting away and retrenching by mortification, all useless satisfactions; it must do violence to itself, in order to live no longer the life of sense; it must crucify the flesh, keep silence, and avoid all vain relations with creatures.

4. It must watch to see that the caterpillars do no harm to the Tree. The caterpillars are self-love, the love of ease, the love of its own purely natural satisfactions, which by eating the flowers and green leaves, destroy the fair hopes which the Tree had of yielding fruit; for love of self and love of Mary, agree in no way together.

5. It must not suffer the beasts of prey to approach it. These beasts are sins, which might bring death to the Tree of Life by their mere touch; even their breath must not be allowed to strike upon it; that is to say, venial sins, which are always very dangerous, if no trouble is taken about them.

6. This divine Tree must be often watered by the soul with fervent exercises of piety, confessions, communions, and other prayers both in

public and private, without which this Tree would cease to yield fruit.

7. The soul must not be troubled, if this Tree be violently shaken by the wind; for it is necessary, that the wind of temptation should shake it, and endeavour to throw it down, and that the snow and ice should surround it, in order, if possible, to destroy it; that is to say, that this devotion to the Most Holy Virgin should of necessity be attacked and contradicted; but the soul, provided that it persevere in the cultivation of this Tree, has nothing to fear.

Predestinate soul, if you thus cultivate the Tree of Life, newly planted in you by the Holy Ghost, I assure you, that in a little time it will grow so high, that the birds of heaven will dwell in it, and it will become so perfect, that at last it will yield its fruit of honour and grace in its season; that is to say, the sweet and adorable Jesus, Who has always been, and always will be, the only fruit of Mary.

Happy the soul, in which Mary, the Tree of Life, is planted; happier the soul in which she has been able to grow and flower; very happy the soul in which she yields her fruit; but most happy of all is the soul which relishes and preserves her fruit until death, and for ever and ever. Amen.

Qui tenet teneat.

If you have the happiness to possess this Tree of Life, guard it as a precious thing, cultivate it with care.

PRAYER TO JESUS.

O most sweet Jesus, suffer me to pour forth my gratitude before Thee, for the grace Thou hast done me in giving me to Thy Holy Mother, as her slave, that she may be my advocate in the presence of Thy Majesty, and make up for all my defects in my very great misery. Alas! Lord, I am so wretched, that without this dear mother, I should be lost beyond all doubt. Yes! Mary is necessary for me before Thee in all things: necessary to calm Thy just wrath, since I have so often offended Thee, and offend Thee every day; necessary to arrest the eternal punishments of Thy justice which I deserve; necessary to look at Thee, to speak with Thee, to pray to Thee, to approach Thee, and to please Thee; necessary to save my soul, and the souls of others; necessary, in a word, that Thy holy will may be always done, and Thy greater glory may be procured in all things. Ah! that I could publish throughout all the world this mercy which Thou hast shown to me! That all the world might know, that without Mary, I should be already damned! That I could offer worthy thanksgiving for such a benefit! Mary is in me, *hæc facta est mihi*, O, what a treasure! O! what consolation! And after this, shall I not be all hers? O! what ingratitude! My dear Saviour, send me rather death, than suffer this misfortune to happen to me: for I would rather die than live, unless I am altogether Mary's own. I have taken her, a thousand and a thousand times for my whole good, with St. John the Evangelist, at the foot of the cross, and as many times have I given myself to her; but I have not as yet done so as Thou wouldst wish,

dear Jesus; I do so now, as Thou wouldst have me do it, and if Thou seest in my soul or in my body anything not belonging to this August Princess, I pray Thee to root it up, and to cast it far from me, for as it does not belong to Mary, it is unworthy of Thee.

Oh Holy Ghost! grant me all these graces; plant, water, and cultivate in my soul this sweet Mary, who is the Tree of the only true Life, so that this Tree may grow, and flower, and bring forth the fruit of Life in abundance. O Holy Ghost, give me a great devotion and a great attraction towards Mary, Thy Divine Spouse, a great support in her maternal bosom, and an abiding refuge in her mercy, so that in her and by her, Thou mayest form in me Jesus Christ, in a life-like way, great and powerful, unto the fulness of His perfect age! Amen!

PRAYER TO MARY.

Hail, Mary, beloved daughter of the Eternal Father! Hail Mary, admirable mother of the Son! Hail Mary, most faithful Spouse of the Holy Ghost! Hail Mary, my dear mother, my sweet Mistress, and my powerful Sovereign! Hail my joy, my glory, my heart, and my soul! Thou art all mine by mercy, and I am all thine by justice; but I am not enough thine as yet: I give myself wholly to thee once again, as thy eternal slave, without keeping anything back for myself or for others. If thou seest still in me, something not belonging to thee, I pray thee to take it away this moment, and to make thyself absolute Mistress of the faculties of my soul; destroy in it, and root up, and bring to nothing all that

may be displeasing to God; plant in it, and raise up, and work in it all that may seem good to thee. May the light of thy faith dispel the darkness of my mind; may thy deep humility take the place of my pride; may thy sublime contemplation arrest the distraction of my wandering imagination; may thy continual sight of God fill my memory with His Presence; may the fire of the charity of thy heart inflame the lukewarmness and coldness of my own; may thy virtues take the place of my sins; may thy merits be my ornament, and make up for all that is wanting in me before God. Lastly, most dear and well-beloved mother, grant, if it may be, that I may have no other spirit but thy spirit, to know Jesus Christ, and His Divine and Blessed Will; that I may have no other soul, but thy soul, to praise and glorify the Lord; that I may have no other heart but thy heart, to love God with a pure and burning love like thine. I ask of thee neither visions, nor revelations, nor gusts, nor raptures, nor even spiritual pleasures; it is for thee to have full fruition without any bitterness; it is for thee to gloriously triumph at the right hand of thy Son in heaven, without any humiliation; it is for thee to have absolute power over the angels, over man, and demons, without their being able to resist thee, and lastly, to dispose of all the good things of God, without reserve. This, O Divine Mary, is that good part, which our Lord hath given thee, and which shall never be taken from thee, and it is this which gives me joy. For my portion here below, I wish for no other but that which thou didst have, that is to say, to believe simply, without either tasting or seeing; to suffer joyously without consolation from creatures; to die continually to myself without a moment's pause; and to labour bravely for thee, even until death, without

any interest of my own, as the vilest of thy slaves. The only grace that I ask of thee, out of pure mercy, is that every day, and every moment of my life, I may say three times *Amen: so be it,* to all that thou didst do on earth; *Amen, so be it,* to all that thou art doing now in heaven; *Amen, so be it,* to all that thou art doing in my soul, so that there may be none but thou, to glorify Jesus in me to the full, through time, and through eternity. Amen. So be it.

OFFERING OF OUR ACTIONS TO GOD,

*Which it is well to make every morning.**

O Eternal Wisdom, O sweet and gentle Jesus, humbly prostrate at Thy feet, I wish to offer Thee as perfectly as the Most Holy Virgin, my thoughts, my words, and my actions of this day. Like her and by her I wish to do all things for Thy love, and for Thy Glory, to serve Thee, to praise Thee, and to bless Thee, and to draw down upon my soul all the grace of which I stand in need. I desire to-day, with all the ardour of my Mother's Heart, to be enlightened in the mysteries of the Faith, to have part in Thy mercy, to satisfy Thy Divine justice, to make my salvation sure, and to obtain for all sinners the grace of true conversion, for the souls of purgatory deliverance and relief, for the just increase of virtue, and for the Religious Orders perseverance in their first fervour.

* This prayer is not by the Ven. de Montfort, but is taken from the Poitiers edition of the "Secret of Mary." (Tr.)

Deign to accept, O God of goodness, this my intention which I would wish to be able to offer Thee every instant of my life, begging Thee, by the Most Holy Virgin, to bless me, and to grant me the grace not to commit to-day any mortal sin, or any deliberate venial sin.

I desire, at the same time, to be present in spirit at all the Masses which may be celebrated throughout the whole world, and I purpose to gain all Indulgences within my power, and I beg my most dear Mother, into whose hands I have abandoned all things, to apply them herself according to her will, and the order of my obligation. Amen.

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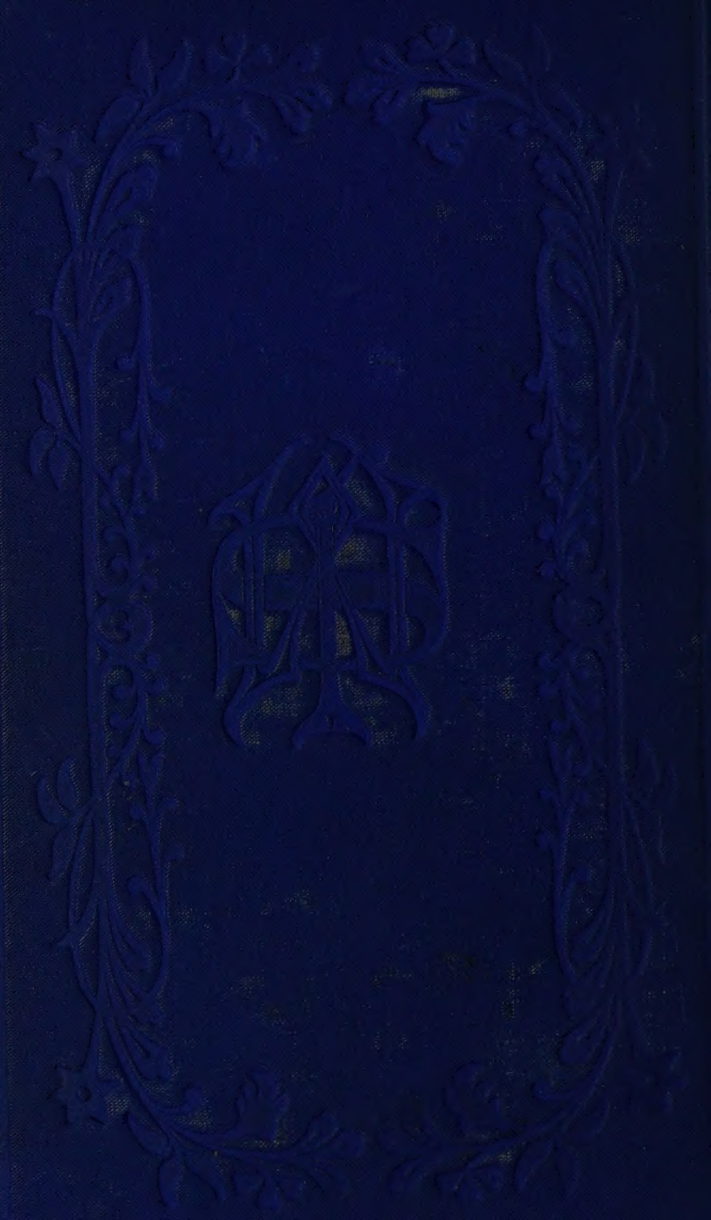
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